

ary
183

ALLEN

CHIVALRY

A DRAMA OF THE REAL SOUTH

1901



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TOWN TOPICS



C H R I S T M A S
H O L I D A Y
N O U M B E R

ary
183

Y RUINART Y



NICHOLAS RUINART
 WAS THE FIRST MAN TO MAKE
 AND SELL CHAMPAGNE
 1729
 HE FOUNDED HIS HOUSE TO MAKE
 RUINART CHAMPAGNE
 THE BEST WINE IN THE WORLD
 * * *
 HE CHOSE THE SUNNY SLOPES OF
 RHEIMS, IN FRANCE,
 AS THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD
 * * *
 AT CHICAGO IN 1893
 THE WORLD'S FAIR JURY GAVE TO
RUINART
 THE HIGHEST AND ONLY AWARD FOR
 BRUT CHAMPAGNE
 ...
 THE WINE WISE OF THE WORLD SUSTAIN
 THAT AWARD AND SAY THE ONE WINE
 IS RUINART
 TO BE HAD AT THE BEST CLUBS AND HOTELS IN THE
 CIVILIZED WORLD.

CHAMPAGNE

Vin Brut
Ruinart père & fils
 Maison fondée en 1729
Rheims, France
 W.C. LEWIS & SCHUYLER, Sole Agents for the United States

W.C. LEWIS CO. BOSTON

Dec 5 1901

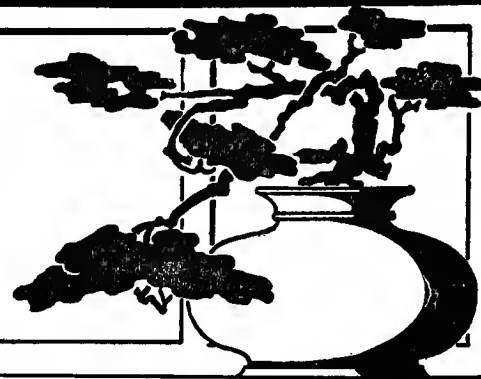


CHIVALRY

A Drama of the Real South

BY

ALFRED ALLEN



ACT FIRST

CLAIRE HALL stands in the midst of a lonely Southern plantation. Two wars have scarred its one-storied walls, built when English bricks were scarcer than king-granted acres. The first Claire's generous needs have been met by rambling additions, built when hands were plenty and money free. The plantation road eats its long way through the ragged lawn to the deep, Colonial veranda, which welcomes it openly, as in days of unrestricted hospitality. At its ivy-clothed corner hangs a great bell, sinister in the sunlight, that scorches everywhere. A group of darkey field hands shuffle lazily along the road to "the quarters," crooning plaintively a plantation melody. LULU, a tidy, yellow housemaid, with a tilt of coquetry, picks up the chorus. JOHNSON lags behind the other negroes.

LULU

Howdy, Mistah Johnsing?

JOHNSON

Howdy, Miss White? Is yo' gwine ter 'company me to de white folks' crownin' dis ebenin'?

(HENRY CLAY enters, proud of his red check shirt. Hat just sticking on and bright tie showing.)

LULU

I'se givin' yo' invitation my considerations, Mistah Johnsing.

CLAY

Good ebenin', Miss White.

LULU (giggling)

Good ebenin', Mr. Clay.

JOHNSON (trying to ward off familiarity)

Good ebenin', Mistah Clay.

CLAY

Is dat you was talkin', Mistah Johnsing? Miss White done promise to desecrate me wid her preferments fo' de Tounement dis ebenin', an' fo' to see de white folks' ball arterwards. (With a gesture of dismissal.) Yo' can 'tend to yo' hoein'.

(LULU giggles rapturously.)

JOHNSON

Wha did you procure all dem high pullutin' clothes at?

CLAY (airily)

Yo' needn't linger, Mistah Johnsing.

JOHNSON

Yo', Henry Clay, sense yo' is tuk to bein' eddicated and stealin' yo' clothes, yo' is a spiled nigger.

CLAY (cocking his hat)

Dat's what eddication am fo', Mistah Johnsing. Ef I was gwine ter be a mule doctor 'stead of a hoss doctor, I'd gib yo' somethin', Mistah Johnsing, would cure yo' of de misery my clothes is gibbin' yo'.

JOHNSON (swinging hoe defiantly)

Yo' come out heah—

LULU (screaching)

G'long outer dis! Yo' ain't got no call to be talkin' to house folks! Yo' get on back to de field—

(JOHNSON looks at them, goes off, protesting violently)

Am yo' fo' sure gwine ter be a hoss doctor, Mistah Clay?

CLAY

Dat I is. I'm layin' out now fo' to see my gyardian, when he comes by from talkin' to de hands. I'm gwine ter ast him ter see Miss Grace—she's jess waitin' fo' his consent in writin' fo' to send me Noff; so yo' better cast yo' eye on me now while I'se handy—

LULU (coquettishly)

Oh! Mistah Clay!

CLAY

Yo's lookin' mighty fancy, Miss White—fo' sure jess like a white lady.

LULU

All my friends tell me I is white in my feelin's.

CLAY

Sho' yo' is. Is yo' prepared to go to de Tounement?

LULU

I reckon I is.

CLAY

Den when I talk wid my gyardian, Mistah Carleton, we'll be gwine. Some of de Knights is rid by a'ready. De white folks is gettin' proper, and de black folks is puttin' on dere shoes. It's fo' sho gwine be a full dress party.

LULU

I'm gwine wait right here till Miss Grace have rid off wid her Knights, 'cose I've done borry her bonnet to do yo' honor to de party. Is yo' gyardian gwine to be at de party?

CLAY

I reckon my gyardian, Mistah Carleton, gwine go ef he want ter.

LULU (laughing impudently at the absurdity)

Maybe Miss Grace gwine ast him.

CLAY (having the old-time training, is ill at ease, frightened at her freedom, and looks about uneasily before he ventures a non-committal answer)

I reckon, maybe.

LULU (with disgust)

Miss Grace ast dat nigger!—yi! yi!

CLAY

Mistah Carleton am a cullud gent'mun.

LULU

Yaw! He ain't nuffin but a nigger, if he am Mistah State Rep-
sen-ta-tive. (Wonderingly.) What am dat?

CLAY

Mistah Carleton gwine tell yo' what dat am if he heah yo' call him "nigger." (SAUL CARLETON enters. Swagger, blue gums, whose bite is dreaded as a mad bulldog's. Silk hat and short sleeve frock-coat—evidently the white donor was not so muscular.) Dere he is!

LULU

Fo' Gawd! (With sudden humility of manner.) Mornin', Mistah Carleton.

(CARLETON proceeds pompously, without noticing.)

CLAY

Mistah Carleton—gyardian—sah! Miss Grace am all ready fo' to have yo' speak to her about me gwine fo' a hoss doctor!

SAUL (stopping short at mention of the white girl's name)

Miss Grace? Ef Miss Grace Claire has any talk she wish to say to me, I's pleased to listen.

LULU (soothingly)

Sho' dey ain't no lady, white nor black, wouldn't have her mind sot up to talk wid yo', Mistah Carleton.

SAUL

Yo' speak to yo' betters when dey 'dress yo'. Jess yo' git in de house an' prevaricate to Miss Claire, dat Mistah Saul Cyarleton, State Representative, is waitin' on her pleasure.

(UNCLE PETE enters. Good, faithful negro of the old South. Not with white wool whiskers, as traditionally and always represented on the stage.)

LULU

I sho' am proud to do yo' commandments.

PETE (threatening)

Yo' don't take no commandments offen nobody don't own yo', yo' yaller lump o' no 'count.

LULU

Dey ain't nobody don't own me—I'se free—I is; dey ain't nobody can sass me an' me stan' by. (Turns to SAUL with labored effort to imitate white politeness.) I will do yo' observance to Miss Grace, Mistah Carleton.

(LULU hurries into house, with air of relief at her escape.)

PETE (calling after her)

Yo' will do yo' work! Dat's what!

(SAUL struts pompously to veranda.)

PETE

Yo' better let Jedge Claire's niggers alone—spilin' 'em in de fields wid yo' votin' talk, an' spilin' 'em in de house wid yo' "observances."

SAUL (with manner of political potentate)

Has yo' a desire to fine yosef in jail fo' sassin' yo' State Representative, yo' black image?

CLAY (*turning up cuffs*)

Gimme de say, Mistah Gyardian, sah, an' I'll lay him stiff!

PETE

Yo'! yo'! Ain't I come to bus' yo' head, yo' Henry Clay? Ain't I tole yo' to git yosef to de depot with de spring wagon? Yo' 'spec' dat doctah gemman gwine walk here?

CLAY (*frightened*)

Mistah Gyardian, sah! He's gwine hit me!

SAUL

I better not see him hit yo'.

(SAUL has his back turned, not to see. PETE belabors CLAY, who howls and runs down the road.)

PETE (*boastfully*)

Dat's yo' Henry Clay a yeller hollerin'.

(LULU enters.)

SAUL

I ain't see yo' hit him. (*To LULU, eagerly.*) What Miss Grace say?

LULU

Miss Grace am abdicated to hab yo' call, Mistah Carleton. An' if yo' would hab de considerations to—

PETE

Miss Grace ain't say no fool talk lak dat—

SAUL (*violently*)

Shet yo' head.

LULU

Miss Grace am a-dressin' ob hersef, but ef yo' would hab de condescensions—

PETE

“Condescensions!” “Condescensions!”

LULU

To ambuscade dis-a-way (*indicating house door*); when she am done dressin', Miss Grace 'ud be pleased to deff to see yo', Mistah Carleton. (*This with defiance of PETE.*)

SAUL

I reckon I'll wait right yere. I have business with Miss Dole. Jess tell Miss Dole I'se a-waitin'.

PETE

Dey ain't no “Miss Dole” yere—dere's a yaller gal yere dat some folks call Dole, an' more folks call “witch debble!”

LULU

I will do yo' observances, Mistah Carleton—

PETE

I done tole yo' to do yo' work.

(AUNT SALLIE enters. Again, as in case of UNCLE PETE she does not wear a red bandanna.)

AUNT SALLIE (*to Uncle Pete*)

Yo' bossin' de house help? Yo' get yosef off where yo' belong. (LULU starts to laugh at this rebuff of PETE. SALLIE turns on her promptly.) Shet yo' mouf.

PETE (*tenderly and cooingly*)

Don't be ha'sh at me, honey.

SALLIE (*uncompromisingly*)

G'long!

LULU (*whimpering*)

I hab an observance fo' Mistah Carleton—

SALLIE

Yo' scoot! An' yo' take off dem allurments; yo' ain't gwine to no white folks' party, wid yo' work all loose. Git an' put Mistah Arthur's room straight. Yo' done took all his soap and towels out. What yo' tink he gwine do for soap and towels? Why, dat man been in Cuby.

LULU (*protesting in excuse*)

He ain't gwine come back.

SALLIE

Dat ain't no difference—his room has gotter stay all fixed. Dat am de orders ob Miss Margaret. Git!

(DOLE enters. She is older than GRACE. Her gray ivory skin, tremulous nostrils and fine lips would deceive a Northerner, but trained instinct would send the Southerner's glance to the roots of her nails. Northern training has glossed a silk finish on the native warp. A man of this type might have been educated into a forger. Women have wider opportunities. Her brows are as fine as the JUDGE'S; so are her hands and wrists. She sways on a beautifully built spine with a carriage stealthy and sure. The severity of the nurse uniform and cap well becomes her. Her bearing towards whites is sullenly constrained, but a Northern intolerance flashes towards the blacks. Her speech is clean white, that colors when her black blood rises.)

DOLE

Sallie, this noise disturbs Mrs. Claire.

SALLIE

I didn't go fo' to hurt Miss Margaret. I jess gib her orders about Mistah Arthur to dat no 'count Lulu.

DOLE

Mistah Arthur! (*As if struck by a blow, then affecting indifference.*) What about Mistah Arthur?

SALLIE

I don't know 's yo' hab a call to know.

DOLE (*seizing her suddenly by the shoulder*)

Is Mistah Arthur expected?

SALLIE (*hurt physically, and frightened*)

Lemme go, yo' witch debble. I don't know. 'Deed I don't. We's always expectin' him, Miss Margaret say. I don't know.

DOLE (*flinging her off*)

Miss Margaret wants her lunch. Go get the tray ready.

SALLIE (*dominated, hurries off*)

I'm gwine, Miss Dole.

(At mention of ARTHUR'S name SAUL saunters up with show of indifference.)

SAUL

Seems lak yo's mighty took up wid Mistah Arthuh Gordon.

DOLE (*in cold, level tone*)

Have you business with me, Saul Carleton?

SAUL

It am a pleasure to see you order niggers about.

DOLE (*still uncompromising*)

If I keep on 'giving orders to niggers, you won't like it so well.

SAUL (*with just a hint of a threat in his tone*)

Yo' better not do no high talk to me.

DOLE

What do you want of me?

SAUL (*bluntly*)

Money—for yaller Kate.

DOLE (*defiantly*)

You'll get none. You've had a month to make her talk.

SAUL

Yaller Kate allus was a close mouth. (*Pause. Looking at her meaningly.*) Jess lak her gal, Dole.DOLE (*in her excitement lapses into inborn black*)

I don't believe she is my mammy! Ef she was, she'd speak out for my good.

SAUL

Yo' do favor your mammy proper when yo' hole up yo' head lak dat.

DOLE (*passion flaming up*)

It's a lie! All I've got from my black mother—curse her!—is this skin I hate. I'm white inside. And I'm going to know who my white kin is.

SAUL

Yo' might fine yosef a lady, ef yo' knew—

DOLE

Oh, I'll know!

SAUL

You'd better gib me de money for yaller Kate.

DOLE

Speak out!

SAUL

It's buryin' money I want fo' yo' mammy. Yaller Kate is dead!

DOLE (*holding Saul personally responsible for death of hope*)

Without telling! You've let her die, and taken my money, and you haven't got it out of her who my white father is! I'll kill you! I'll tear her dead heart out!

SAUL (*quietly*)Oh, she's tole. I got it all right. I got it here in this affydvit (*he shows paper*) jess who you are—an' jess who's yo' white kin—an—DOLE (*crying out exultantly and blacker*)

Oh, my Lordy! Seems lak my heart's gwine burst! I'm gwine to gib a name to my white blood. Gimme de paper.

SAUL (*understanding his advantage*)

It's wuff mor'n de money yo've paid me. I have raise my price.

DOLE (*venomously*)

Fo' Gawd, I'll witch yo' where yo' stan'!

SAUL

Not me. I'm yo' master.

DOLE (*brought to terms*)

How much money do you want?

SAUL

I don't want money. I want yo' again.

DOLE (*with calm decisiveness*)

I'd die first—

SAUL

Yo' kin marry me cose yo' wants to, er cose yo' white kin say yo' has to—but yo's gwine marry me. Ma hold on yo' is good—and I knows it.

DOLE (*changing to woman*)Oh, Saul! leave me be! I ain't the same girl I was before I went to school. All the black in me that you held me by, is gone out of me. (*Showing herself at full figure.*) Yo' can see it is. (*Then, appealingly.*) What fo' you want to kill me now?SAUL (*hard*)

I have my reason. 'Pears lak I'd be pleased to see Jedge Claire liff his hat to me. 'Pears lak it 'ud do me good to see Miss Grace look at me lak I warn't a nigger. Seems lak—

COOK'S IMPERIAL EXTRA DRY.

DOLE (*half suffocating when she realizes what Saul betrays*)
Miss Grace—Judge Claire!

SAUL (*quietly but clearly giving momentous information*)
They's yo' white kin. Judge Claire an' Miss Grace, an' all of them, is yo' kin.

DOLE (*enlightened as by lightning flash*)
That's why he's been so good to me; that's why he let me go to school when Arthur Gordon asked him to. And I'll be worth it. I'll go down on my knees and pray him to own me. I'll make myself a lady. I'll be as good and pure as she is. I can. The same blood that makes her white is in me, and it shall make me white, too.

SAUL (*cutting in coldly, unmoved by her outburst of passion*)
Use yo' white sense. Youse gwine to git jess what money yo' want outen the Judge fo' to hole yo' mouf shet, and youse gwine give me all I want fo' to marry yo' and keep my mouf shet. (*Drawing closer.*)

DOLE (*scared*)
Keep your hands off me, Saul Carleton!

SAUL (*his tone indicates calculation, not love*)
I love yo', jess the same as I loved yo' befo yo' schoolin' turned yo' head, and I'm gwine marry yo' now!

DOLE (*in a burst*)
When I marry, I marry white. When I'm a wife, it will be Arthur Gordon's. (*Realizing the significance of what she has said.*) It's said. He loves me. He has, ever since he knew me for better than what I was being brought up to. (*As a woman will, fortifies false hope.*) It was he had me sent away to school for to learn to be worth him. It's for him I want to be all I can be. An' I'm gwine be worth him!

SAUL (*still unmoved by her outburst, talks cold sense*)
Yo's mad! When Arthuh Gordon looks for a wife, it's gwine to be to somethin' white, lak Grace Claire—something white lak a lily.

DOLE (*quivering under the torture*)
I'd kill her if I thought it. But I know better. Ah! leave me be, Saul!

SAUL
Yo's mine. An' yo' kin's gwine to know it, too, ef yo' cross me now.

DOLE
They won't believe.

SAUL (*still coldly*)
Yo's mine.

DOLE
Not till I come to you for help against my white kin, an' that'll be never, Saul Carleton!

SAUL
I'm not takin' my answer now. Yo'll feel diffent when yo' have seen the Judge. Here's yo' paper.

DOLE (*exultantly*)
It makes me free of yo' forever.

(AUNT SALLIE enters)
AUNT SALLIE (*beaming with satisfaction at what she has done for her invalid mistress*)
Miss Margaret's tray is waitin' fo' her. Won't yo' jess lemme gib Miss Margaret her lunch this time?—jess this once?

DOLE
Get to the kitchen, where you belong!

SAUL (*formally, as he has seen white men do*)
Yo' might tell yo' young missis, Miss Grace, that I'll be this a-way later to see her, lak she tole me, Miss Dole.

DOLE
I take no messages. See to it, Sallie. (*DOLE goes into house.*)

SALLIE (*daring to revolt*)
I'm gwine to kill dat gal! (*She yells at SAUL, who goes swaggering out the gate.*) Stir yosef outen heah! (*PETE enters with big shears.*) I'm gwine to kill dat gal if ever I cotch her when she ain't witch-debbin'! I'se gwine bus' her head open! 'Pears lak I mus' bus' somethin' now! (*Sees PETE. An unexpected chance.*) Pete, I'm gwine bus' yo' head open!

PETE (*sweetly*)
What I done, honey?

SALLIE
Ain't I tole yo' to keep off de front ob de house?

PETE
I'm gettin' jassamine fo' Miss Grace fo' to wear at de Tounement, honey.

SALLIE
She ain't gwine wear jessamine, yo' fool, when her lilies is done bloomed.

(*Singing of KNIGHTS heard approaching. College song. Pickaninnies rush on from all directions, two from under piazza. SALLIE and PETE shoo them off. KNIGHTS enter; darkies rush to hold horses, which are gayly decorated. UNCLE PETE tries to suppress the pickaninnies and at the same time be dignified and polite to the guests. KNIGHTS call: "Hello, Miss Grace. Oh, Miss Grace!" They swing off horses and*)

help ladies dismount. JUDGE CLAIRE appears at door of house. As he stands in the doorway, gracious, threadbare, the picture of the old house is completed. His face is like Gilbert Stuart's—not Cosciuszko's—Thomas Jefferson, that hangs at Bowdoin College. Fine lips and brow. Chin upheld as if influenced by the underswathing stocks worn by his ancestors. Wrists and hands that miss lace ruffles. There is pathetic stateliness in all he does. His voice is full of it and rounds his periods into last century charm. Nothing has ever hurried him. No one has ever questioned his authority.)

JUDGE CLAIRE
Welcome, Queens of the Court of Love and Beauty—welcome, brave Sir Knights!

ONE OF THE GIRLS
Where's Grace?

JUDGE (*shaking hands in old-time manner*)
Not ready yet, so I have the honor to welcome you in her stead.

ANOTHER OF THE GIRLS
How is Mrs. Claire?

JUDGE
My wife is not as well as usual, I regret.

GIRLS (*murmur of condolence*)
You will let us run in and see her, won't you?

JUDGE (*cordially*)
Yes, indeed. (*GIRLS start into the house.*) And hasten Grace at the same time. I will try to entertain the gentlemen here.

(*Some of the girls flock, chattering merrily, into the house, others sit on steps; men group themselves about.*)
(SALLIE enters with tray on which are whisky bottles, seltzer and cut glass of last century make, which she places on a little round table under a magnolia.)

JUDGE
What shall it be, ladies?

GIRL
I like vichy, Judge.

OTHER GIRLS
So do I.

JUDGE
Noble Sir Knights, you have each donned the color of some fair lady, that, in accordance with a custom as old as Chivalry itself, you may do honor at the Tournament to womanhood. In what shall we drink, gentlemen, to the chivalry inspired by the beauty of these fair ladies? In what shall we drink, all of us, to the success of each and every one who today rides to crown his choice the Queen of Love and Beauty?

KNIGHT (*who has been sitting on steps, comes forward*)
It must be water for me, Judge—you know that little horse of mine.

JUDGE (*handing him glass of water*)
Water, then, which the toast makes warm as wine.

KNIGHT (*also advancing*)
Water here, too, Judge—I have noble Knights to ride against.

KNIGHT (*who is carrying glass of water to girl on steps*)
Same here.

JUDGE
Water, then; and if our ladies do but smile we think it wine.

GIRL (*rising and holding up her glass*)
To the knights of our Southern chivalry, who, pure in heart as the knights of old, stand ever ready to honor and protect us. (*They drink, in a pretty picture.*)

GIRL (*who wears orange*)
And now, to our absent Knight—you know whom I mean, Judge.

KNIGHT
Yes. To Arthur Gordon.

JUDGE (*love for Arthur colors his voice*)
Thank you, thank you. Bless the dear fellow, he was in that charge up San Juan Hill—

KNIGHT (*of the crimson emblem*)
All the fellows are getting their furloughs now. Won't he be here soon?

JUDGE
We always look for him.

KNIGHT (*with the orange emblem*)
He rode with the best of us, but we'd have no chance at all against him, now.

PINK KNIGHTS
It all depends on the lady a fellow rides for. Now I— (*The girls return from house and group themselves on steps, consciously adding to the picture, and not rumpling their fresh dresses.*)

GIRL
What do you think of them, Judge? Both wearing pink, just because it is your daughter's color—and both fighting each other and everyone else. Yet Grace has not chosen them her knights at all.

JUDGE (*entering heartily into spirit of the jest*)
How is this, gentlemen?

FIRST PINK KNIGHT
When Miss Grace sees my lovely pink crest she is sure to choose me.

SECOND PINK KNIGHT

When Miss Grace beholds this fairy plume she will take me.

GIRL

Please, dear Judge, as an officer of the State, arrest one and keep him here till I can get the other safe in the hands of the officers of the Tournament. Suppose there should be an outbreak of jealousy, and they should charge each other on the way—think of leaving pieces of Pink Knight all along the road!

JUDGE

This is too serious a matter for my court—it must go to my court of all appeals, my daughter. (GRACE appears in doorway, a vision of maidenly beauty.) Here she is!

PINK KNIGHTS

Ah! My Queen of Love and Beauty!

GRACE (her first smile to her father)

Gentlemen!

JUDGE

Behold these noble Knights who ride for you! Pray command them to wait till the Tournament decides which shall have that honor.

GRACE

Oh, don't fight, gentlemen! I am not going to the Tournament; at least, till after the doctor arrives and I hear what he thinks about mamma. And besides, I am not going to wear pink, but white, because my lilies are in bloom. (Mock despair on part of the KNIGHTS. ARTHUR comes along the road. He is like any thoroughbred young American, North or South.)

PINK KNIGHTS

Not until you choose another Knight will I give up.

GRACE

Then I will choose—let me see—someone whom you will not fight. I'll choose—Arthur Gordon!

ARTHUR

Who calls Arthur Gordon?

GRACE (shaken by surprise and welcome)

Oh, dear! You here!

ARTHUR

Always, when you call, fair cousin. (General and enthusiastic greetings in the open-hearted Southern manner, for they love and honor him.)

JUDGE

How did you get here?

ARTHUR

Our transport ran into Charleston, and I worked a good strong pull and got let off without going to New York.

JUDGE

Why didn't you telegraph?

ARTHUR (whimsically)

I was in a hurry.

GIRL (any fool girl)

Where are all your Spanish prisoners?

ARTHUR

I didn't take any myself.

GIRL

Oh, dear me! (She is suppressed, and the matter explained to her.)

PINK KNIGHT (cheerfully)

Well, you may have escaped Weyler and Garcia and all of them, but you have got to die now, old chap.

ARTHUR (laughingly)

Help! What for?

OTHER PINK KNIGHT

The lady of our choice, Miss Claire, has chosen you to ride for her.

ARTHUR (seriously)

Good! (He kneels gallantly at her feet.)

GRACE (flushing furiously as she stammers)

Oh! no, no; I didn't know you were there!

ARTHUR

But I was there, and your chosen knight I am before all these witnesses.

GRACE (seeking some excuse for escape)

Oh, you haven't any costume!

ARTHUR (mysteriously)

Haven't I! (He holds his long, light overcoat around him. The KNIGHTS begin to exclaim, and surround him.)

KNIGHTS

Off with it! off with it! (They fling off the coat, displaying the Rough Rider uniform. Cheering.)

GRACE

And oh, dear! you haven't my colors.

ARTHUR

I shall do nicely with the scarf from your arm, fair lady. Speak for me, uncle.

JUDGE

With all my heart.

GRACE (yields to her heart and circumstances and takes ends of scarf, but yet fights, like the girl she is, while tying scarf about Arthur's arm) Oh! but I'm not going, anyhow. We are expecting Dr. Ainslee from up North, for mother and—

ARTHUR (with sudden gravity)

Is Aunt Margaret ill? (GRACE and ARTHUR speak together.)

KNIGHT

Here comes the phaeton, Judge.

JUDGE

It must be the Doctor. (Goes to gate as phaeton is driven up.)

(DOCTOR AINSLEE enters. He is a brisk Northerner, ruddy, prosperous, radiating Christmas-tree cheer. His cold-bath-in-the-morning skin is set off by crisp, white hair; warm, gray eyes, under frosty brows; his voice hearty, as a good doctor's should be. His clothes are expensive, spick and span; undoubtedly made to order, but not restricted by a tailor's idea of fashion. His hustling breeziness is in the strongest contrast to the JUDGE's lassitude, his prosperous health to the JUDGE's wan serenity.)

DOCTOR AINSLEE

Can I see Judge Claire?

JUDGE

That's my name (not recognizing him, but heartily, as to any stranger). Welcome to Claire Hall, suh.

DOCTOR

Jack, don't you know me?

JUDGE (from his heart)

Phil!

GRACE (prettily playing hostess)

Dr. Ainslee, welcome!

JUDGE (the old chums hold fast to each other's hands)

Gentlemen, my dear friend, Dr. Ainslee, who for so many years has refused our invitations to come South that we hardly knew each other just now, yet who hastens to us in this very hour we telegraph our need. Dr. Ainslee, ladies, Dr. Ainslee, this is the flower of our Southern chivalry, you see.

KNIGHT (with Southern hospitality)

Wish you could join us in our Tournament festivities, Doctor.

GIRL (with that charm which wins all Northern hearts)

Dr. Ainslee, we will all choose you for our Knight if you will only ride.

DOCTOR (vanquished)

Jack, how I have wasted time! I have heard of the beauty of the daughters of the South, and thought it all poetry—till now.

GIRL

Ah! there are poets North, too, I see! (KNIGHTS and GIRLS with chatter and laughter mount, ride off, admonishing GRACE not to be long.)

JUDGE (who enjoys introducing people who should be friends)

Phil, this is my nephew, Arthur Gordon; he is just from Cuba—where fellows like him have shed their blood to show you damned Yankees that we love the old flag as well as you.

DOCTOR (grasping the Rough Rider's hand)

Glad to know you. It is fellows like you in whom the hope of the new Union rests, a Union from which all bitterness has fled. Eh, Jack?

ARTHUR (experienced in exchange of courtesies)

If I am Hope, you, sir, are Charity—and this dear old Secesh here will stand for Faith in all mankind.

GRACE

And womankind, too.

DOCTOR (with manner of all America—North, South, East and West) The only thing we will ever fight for again.

GRACE

She bids you live in peace.

JUDGE

A drink to the New Union! (GRACE pours their wine with dainty curve of wrist.)

ARTHUR

Good!

DOCTOR

Blessed be the Queen of the New South. (GRACE touches her lips to each glass. They all drink and break their glasses.)

ARTHUR

Now, what is it about dear Aunt Margaret?

GRACE (serious at thought of her mother)

Oh, she is not as well as when you were here a year ago, Arthur. She does not walk about at all now. Oh, dear Dr. Ainslee, you will make her well again, won't you?

DOCTOR

I will try, hard. When can I see Mrs. Claire?

JUDGE

As soon as you have been to your room. Arthur, my boy, your old room is always ready for you.

ARTHUR

No good till my bag comes, uncle. I let Henry Clay have it to tote, so I needn't be in a hurry.

JUDGE (pausing on steps)

That boy is worse than ever, Arthur. All because Grace here is going to have him educated. (JUDGE follows DOCTOR into the wide hall of the old house.)

ARTHUR (*his soldierly bearing melting in the face of this real danger*)
Are you glad to see me, pretty cousin?

GRACE (*standing aloof in girlish shyness*)
How dared you come like that, Arthur! And just when I called you, too!

ARTHUR (*truthfully but not boldly*)
It must have been because I thought you wanted me.

GRACE
But I didn't. I thought, surely, you were miles and miles away. What do you suppose everyone thought, to see you appear like that?

ARTHUR (*blandly*)
That I wasn't "miles and miles away."

GRACE
Oh, you make me so angry! (*At herself, she might have meant.*)

ARTHUR (*boyishly*)
I always did. But I don't mind. And I shall ride for you today and crown you! That is, if ever Henry Clay comes.

GRACE
But I am not going to the Tournament. (*DOLE appears on the veranda. The white in her keeps her body unnaturally rigid; the black cannot be kept from her tone.*)

DOLE
Mistah Arthur, Mrs. Claire hopes to see you soon.

ARTHUR (*cordially, as to a well-known servant*)
Ah, Dole! How was the school up North?

DOLE (*her life in her words*)
I learned all I could.

GRACE (*glad to have someone else to talk about*)
Yes, indeed, Arthur, Dole is quite wonderful; knows all about nursing and lots about medicine.

ARTHUR (*looking at Grace*)
That's good news, Dole—and you are grown handsomer than ever, too. (*DOLE nervously begins to clear table.*)

GRACE
Yes, I tell her she is the prettiest yellow girl about here.
DOLE (*the black breaks out convulsively and she crushes a glass in her hand. She gasps once like a wounded animal*)

ARTHUR (*sincerely concerned*)
Are you hurt?
DOLE (*the white conquering in control*)
Yes, I'm hurt.

ARTHUR
Here, take my handkerchief.
GRACE (*all womanly sympathy*)
Is it all right?

DOLE
It's all right now, thank you. Thank you, Mistah Arthur. I'se right glad to see you back again, sir.

(HENRY CLAY comes along road, carrying dress-suit case)

ARTHUR (*lightly*)
And I'm glad to get back.

GRACE
Take Mr. Arthur's bag to his room, Dole. (*DOLE starts sullenly.*)
Aren't you ashamed to have been such a time, Henry Clay? You will never be a horse doctor if you carry bags that way.

HENRY CLAY
I don't want to be a hoss doctor carrying bags, Miss Grace.
(*DOLE takes bag with sudden determination. Carries it into house. DOCTOR and JUDGE stroll out onto veranda.*)

JUDGE (*whose look is grave*)
Mrs. Claire expects you, Arthur.

ARTHUR
I'll have my togs changed at once. How do you find Aunt Margaret, Dr. Ainslee?

(JUDGE, with a look toward GRACE, warns the DOCTOR.)

DOCTOR
Oh, Mrs. Claire will come on finely—

JUDGE
Run, Grace, and be ready for the Tournament. Your mother frets to have you late.

GRACE (*her maidenhood still battling against Arthur*)
I don't want to go, indeed I don't.

DOCTOR (*taking the bridge and the whole ship*)
Nonsense! Off with you! The happier your mother is kept, the better for her.

ARTHUR (*as he steps aside to let her enter door first*)
And I shall crown you, Grace!

JUDGE
Now, Phil, we're alone.

DOCTOR (*gravely, as the awful news demands.*)
It is heart disease, Jack!

JUDGE (*breaking down pitifully*)
Is there no hope?

DOCTOR
Every hope. Keep her happy and her mind free from care.

JUDGE (*bitterly*)

Here? Happiness and freedom from care *here!* You don't know what you say. We are an armed camp. The black horde of savages about us are wrecking our fortunes, threatening our dignity and freedom, menacing the sanctity of our homes. How shall we bring peace of mind to the mother who trembles at every shadow, and is smitten to the heart with terror if her daughter is beyond the protecting circle of her arms?—whose safety, unless the men of her family are within call, depends upon the clanging of that bell that hangs there. That is to ring, Phil (*with dread significance*), if need be. The nearest house is three miles from here, and danger may be in any shadow. Happiness, peace, here!

DOCTOR

Are you speaking of the blacks about you, Jack?—the creatures to whom you left the care and safety of your women when you went out to fight against their rights in '61? They were patient and loyal.

JUDGE

The dog at my fireside is patient and loyal—generations of obedience to man have made him so. But he comes of wolves—turn him free in the woods, the wolf will rise again; his offspring will rend our children and devour them. You men of the North have set our blacks free—they vote, they are as good as we, and more powerful at the polls. Our dogs have turned to wolves at our very hearthstones, and we have no help!

DOCTOR (*still in Northern denseness*)

The law!

JUDGE (*striding back and forth in excitement*)

The law! The law that sets wolves among us and forbids us to shoot them down *like* wolves. What is the law to a negro? Does it keep him from crime? Does it punish him for crime? No. The pomp and ceremony of the law delights him. He fears only the swift fall of the lash. We are helpless, Phil, I tell you. I am an American citizen—my country has decided that slavery is wrong; that it wrongs the humanity of the negro, and degrades the civilization of the white. Good! But at least slavery gave the rule to the white—and it fostered the virtues of the black. What happens in the new state of things? The blacks are irresponsible and uncontrolled children with the loosed passions of savage men—the whites are trodden down, or they degrade their citizenship by violating the laws of their country, that their wives may know some semblance of peace, their daughters something like safety. They must take the law into their own hands! keep bells like that hanging at their doors!

DOCTOR

Lynching, Jack? Never! while the sun shines on a land of freedom! Our struggle for the negro is but just begun—he is freed from the shackles of slavery, but not those of ignorance. We must uplift him, educate him, ennoble him, by the rights of citizenship.

JUDGE

Aye, give the rights of citizenship to creatures incapable of sustaining its responsibilities! Make them public officials over the whites—postmasters, State representatives!

DOCTOR (*protesting obstinately*)

The law *must* be upheld.

JUDGE

Yes, the law must be upheld—I have been speaking as a man, not as an officer in the service of my country; as a man, torn by the news you have just told me of my beloved wife—a victim to the tragedy of fear the law has brought to our doors. As an officer in my country's service, I say, with you, "The law must be upheld"—shall be, while I have breath and strength.

(SAUL appears at kitchen entrance—a black, heavy blot.)

DOCTOR

Yes; and any man in the service of his country, no matter what his skin, should be held in the respect due his office.

JUDGE

Good! You will have a chance to try your theory before you leave, I reckon.

DOCTOR (*observing curiously the pompous advance of Saul*)

Who the devil is this nigger, Jack?

JUDGE (*looks up, then glances at the Doctor with the trace of a smile*)

Phil, this is Saul Carleton, our State Representative.

DOCTOR (*blundering like a true Northern man in his first treatment of the black on black soil*)

How do you do, sir? Will you sit down here? Jack, shall I pass the cigars?

SAUL (*with something of old-time training in the presence of his superiors*)

I'se come by appointment fo' to speak to Miss Grace, Jedge Claire.

(*He sits down pompously but ill at ease, one eye on the JUDGE, longing to enjoy impudence, but hardly daring. GRACE and ARTHUR come out of the house ready for the Tournament. GRACE carries a bunch of lilies. Drops one on the steps. DOLE appears in door, carrying wrap for GRACE. Men all rise.*)

GRACE (*merrily*)

By-by, daddy!

JUDGE (*like every father*)

Take good care of her, Arthur.

GRACE (*notices Saul for first time. Is considerate, as of any other negro*)

Oh, Saul! I am so sorry I forgot all about you. Won't you come back again this evening?

SAUL (*servilely*)

Suttenly, Miss Grace.

(*He steps aside by the steps. DOLE lays GRACE'S lace wrap about her shoulders. ARTHUR and GRACE come down steps and go along drive. DOCTOR and JUDGE call a good-bye.*)

JUDGE

Let's keep it from her as long as we can, Phil.

DOCTOR

She need never know. (*He follows JUDGE out toward the quarters.*)

(*SAUL picks up lily GRACE dropped and stands tearing it with his teeth. DOLE, noting it, suddenly lays her hand on his shoulder.*)

DOLE

Keep your eyes down, you fool! Or, if you look up, look as high as the bell there—you know what would happen if you set that to ringing, you black nigger!

SAUL (*defiantly*)

Keep your eyes down, yo' white nigger. It's Grace Claire that Arthur Gordon's after, curse him!—it's Grace Claire! (*He tears the lily again, with wolfish white teeth.*)

DOLE

I won't believe it. He's not going to see a pale doll like her, when his eyes have looked at me. I won't believe it!

SAUL

I tell yo', it's so.

DOLE

Then I'll kill her!

(*The curtain hides their tense figures.*)

ACT SECOND

The JUDGE and DOCTOR are comfortable in the deep chairs of the Claire Hall living-room. MRS. CLAIRE'S sitting-room and other apartments open from this room. It is really a hall. When the JUDGE wishes to be undisturbed, he goes into the library, but he loves this low, cool room. Its mahogany furniture is mixed with modern rattan. The dusky, fine old portraits are winked at by modern wall cabinets and bric-à-brac. A splendid fireplace denies its purpose behind masses of pampas grass. The matting confesses, by its light centre, to the removal of the Winter carpet-rug. In the row of western windows that open on the veranda, muslin curtains sway gently. Great fans lie about, and on the side-table are old silver, china and cut glass. The JUDGE and DOCTOR are smoking. The JUDGE evidently enjoys the unaccustomed taste of the DOCTOR'S fine cigars—his wife had needed a wheel chair.

JUDGE (*blowing smoke slowly*)

Well, Phil, how did you like your Liberty-Equality-Fraternity experiment with our State Representative, Saul?

DOCTOR

It went down hard, I confess it! But the theory is right, Jack. A man in State or Government service should be respected according to his office, no matter what the color of his skin. But—why the devil do you make State officers out of that sort of nigger?

JUDGE

We can't help ourselves since you Northerners have taken to running our affairs. You'll find this interesting Southern question bites, and bites hard, when you get close to it.

DOCTOR (*fuming*)

Of all the infernal, insolent, ignorant—

JUDGE (*smiling*)

You wouldn't stand him in any capacity up North, now, would you?

DOCTOR

Well, we—we might be obliged to, on a Pullman car.

JUDGE

Here, we live with him. We are at his mercy. He is only one of a million who think themselves as good as we, because you Yankees have given them votes. He is a part of this Southern question you Northerners have made, and left us Southerners to live with and answer. But he is only a part.

DOCTOR (*with sudden inspiration*)

Cut the place and come North!

JUDGE (*shaking his head slowly*)

Can't afford it. All values are depreciated in this fair land of ours since it is an accomplished fact that the laws do not protect the whites. We who must support the law know this most bitterly of all. I would sell out in a minute if I could get a buyer at any price, but I can't. We who are here must stay—stay to see our fortunes melt (*with a slow look around the room*); stay to see the heart worn from our women by the constant threat and fear that haunts this armed camp, that used to be the "Sunny South," stay, n trembling for our daughters. I would sell at any sacrifice just

to get North and keep the ladies, Margaret and Grace, from the sight of a black face—but—who would buy?

DOCTOR (*whole-heartedly, as he does everything*)

Jack, old friend, let me buy. Shut up! I want to quit practice and devote myself to my work on neurasthenia. My affairs must be looked to. I am no business man. Come and be my lawyer.

JUDGE (*closing his eyes a moment*)

I believe you mean it.

DOCTOR (*businesslike*)

That's why I said it. What is the place worth?

JUDGE

As it stands, about \$20,000. With two years of proper development, it should bring at least \$40,000. Properly developed, it is worth an income of \$6,000 a year.

DOCTOR (*getting down to business*)

Let me have it, Jack. I'll send down Northern labor and make the cotton hum. (*Laughs.*) I'll make money off you. Say yes, Jack. I need you, and the place needs me.

JUDGE (*hesitating, because he fears even a hint at charity*)

If we can come to any reasonable business arrangement, I'll be glad, Phil. . . . But you must look into it and—

DOCTOR (*thumping the table*)

Of course I'll look into it. Only say you will come.

JUDGE

Northern labor is impossible, but I could look after your Northern affairs and run the place from the North, through an agent here, and make money for you.

DOCTOR

Make money for us both! Good! It is settled.

JUDGE (*still honorably in doubt*)

If, after looking it over properly, you think the same way—

DOCTOR

When can you leave?

JUDGE (*slowly*)

When can my wife move?

DOCTOR (*briskly*)

As soon as she and Grace can pack.

JUDGE (*he isn't used to quick thinking, and is afraid of the women's packing*)

That ought to be in a week.

DOCTOR (*who isn't married*)

Great Scott! I should think so!

(DOLE, with plate of grapes, passes to the invalid's room. The JUDGE, of course, does not even see her. The DOCTOR'S eyes follow her. Any man's would.)

JUDGE

What do you know about it, you abandoned old bachelor?

DOCTOR

This nurse, Dole, seems a capable person. She can go with you, I presume.

JUDGE (*with great hesitancy in his voice*)

Yes, yes!

DOCTOR (*musingly*)

A remarkably handsome girl, but a capable nurse. (*Something about the JUDGE halts him.*) Has she black in her?

JUDGE (*constrained*)

Yes.

DOCTOR (*enthusiastic*)

There is no eighth or sixteenth breed so interesting, psychologically, as the black and white. Do you know this girl's history? Her mother was—

JUDGE (*who wants the Doctor to know, yet fears he will guess*)

One of my father's slaves—a very beautiful mulatto. She loved the man.

DOCTOR (*with professional interest*)

Ah! Such a case is most interesting. As a rule, the woman is a mere toy or victim. The devotion of this girl's mother to the man probably accounts for the higher qualities in the girl. Such a combination of the best in the lower race and the unregulated passions of the dominant race should create a most interesting and unhappy character.

JUDGE (*who is suffering*)

Don't judge, Phil! The association of which you speak is a very rare one, now. All relations between the races are changed. The responsibilities were less than you imagine in the old days—the association was rather an honor—an—an advantage to the woman, than an injury. It almost always resulted in a betterment of her condition. The man's idle fancy—or unconsidered passion—did not necessarily make a toy or victim of the woman. As for the child—the child was always well cared for. Its white blood secured it fitting consideration and opportunities. It is true that in these new days—

DOCTOR

Ah, yes. Now, the matter must be very different. Such a girl

BROMO-SELTZER, THE NERVE LULLABY

as Dole must represent a serious problem and responsibility—through such as she, retribution; delayed and awful, must often come.

JUDGE (*forgetting his caution*)

Good God! Phil, why? The girl has been well cared for—always will be well cared for as long as I live. I have given her a good education, North. She is a capable trained nurse—she should be happy—and her mother was done no injury. (*The two men understand each other, and the pause is full. The JUDGE relieves it by striking the bell.*) Forgive me, Phil. You have touched another phase of the Southern question—one that is “interesting,” as you say, to you of the North. To us it is part of our daily problem. “Retribution, delayed and awful” (*solemnly*), it may be. (*There is nothing the DOCTOR can say.*)

AUNT SALLIE (*who loves to answer the Judge's bell, flutters eagerly in the doorway*)

Yes, Massa John.

JUDGE (*with all the kindness a Northern man would show a child*) Is your Miss Margaret coming to the sitting-room this evening?

AUNT SALLIE (*who cherishes him now as when a little chap*) Yes, Massa John. Is yo' got yo' slippers, Massa John?

JUDGE

Yes, thank you, Aunt Sallie.

AUNT SALLIE

Don't yo' want me to pull the curtains, Massa John? It's mos' sundown.

(*The KNIGHTS' chorus sounds, coming nearer as the merry young folk hasten down the road.*)

JUDGE

No, thank you, Aunt Sallie. Ah, here come the children.

AUNT SALLIE (*who is loath to leave as a mother-bird*)

Sho' yo' is leff to do fo' yosef ef I don't do fo' yo', Massa John. Dey ain't none ob dem eddicated, pay niggers kin do fo' de family lak us niggers dat is de family—fo' sho' dey ain't.

JUDGE

That's true, Auntie. Look at that sunset, Phil! (*With the almost feminine tenderness of great natures.*) Ah, me! I've looked at it and loved it for the past forty years.

DOCTOR (*encouragingly*)

We have sunsets up North, too, old friend.

JUDGE (*lingeringly*)

Yes, yes.

AUNT SALLIE

Ain't dey nuffin else yo' is a-wantin', Massa John, suh?

JUDGE

No, Auntie, thank you.

(AUNT SALLIE finally retires toward the kitchen.)

DOCTOR (*whose eyes have followed her, too*)

Now that's the sort of nigger we read about. Why don't you have more of them?

JUDGE (*it's his turn again*)

You have made voters of them—citizens—taught them they are the masters; made them forget the virtues, privileges and merciful restrictions of slavery. Sallie is one of the old régime; to the negroes of her kind we left our wives and children when we went out to fight in '61, and the men and women of her kind were loyal to their trust. Those were the faithful, simple-hearted, trusted and trusting slaves you all have freed—freed to make Saml Carletons of them. (*Shouts outside. Laughter. The young folk are at the gate.*) Ah, the children are here!

(*So they are. They pour in, the GIRLS all sweet coquetry, the men chivalry. GRACE has been made Queen, and bears herself with charming royalty.*)

KNIGHTS

Hail to our Queen of Love and Beauty!

(*The JUDGE and DOCTOR catch the youthful spirit, and, joining in the impromptu ceremony, bend each a knee, kissing the queenly finger tips GRACE extends.*)

JUDGE

Hail, O Queen!

DOCTOR

Thy most loyal subject! Reign, O Queen!

GRACE

Hail and rain! Oh, what dreadful weather! Arise, my noble sirs, and be assured of our regard.

JUDGE

Puss, I'm proud of you! (*He turns to the KNIGHTS.*) Which Knight has done my house this honor?

ARTHUR (*whose victory makes him feel Grace more than ever his*) I rode against the noblest of the South.

KNIGHTS

It was a noble victory. All hail to the Queen! We are glad he won.

JUDGE (*with elaborate ceremony*)

Sir Arthur, Knight of the White Token, I thank you. And again, hail to Your Grace!

GRACE

Your Grace, daddy!

JUDGE

Sweetheart! (*She seems very little in the circle of his arm.*) You will wait here, O noble Knights and Fair Ladies, till your Queen is ready for the Royal Ball?

GIRLS (*they have their own clothes to think of*)

No, indeed, we must dress.

ARTHUR

An escort returns for Her Gracious Majesty.

JUDGE

As is the custom.

GRACE

She will not keep you waiting.

JUDGE

As is not the custom.

KNIGHT

Treason to the Crown!

(*The two PINK KNIGHTS dash forward threateningly. GRACE, with royal authority, waves them back.*)

JUDGE (*in full spirit of the occasion*)

What! In my own house my word is law!

GRACE

Not tonight, daddy. Am I not Queen? My word is law!

JUDGE

Now and always, Queen! I was young once, and a Knight. (*The KNIGHTS indorse this with a hearty shout.*)

GRACE

Still young and my Knight, always.

GIRLS

No! I choose the Judge! No, I!

GIRL

And I, the Doctor! You are coming to the dance, Doctor?

GRACE

Of course you will, and dance with me. I command.

DOCTOR

You have but to request. But . . . it would ruin my practice.

GRACE

I insist on my dance!—at once! (*She takes the DOCTOR's hand prettily. They dance a few steps, the KNIGHTS keeping time.*)

KNIGHT

Behold our Queen!

(*MRS. CLAIRE, who in her room has heard the pretty tumult, and could not stay away, is pushed on in the invalid chair by DOLE. Everything about her shows her the petted invalid.*)

GRACE (*who chiefly spoils her*)

Ah, mamsie, that means you. Here is the only Queen in this house.

(*Everybody is charming to her, and she is delighted like a child.*)

JUDGE (*out of his heart*)

A Queen whose crown of silver outshines even the gold her daughter wears!

(*DOLE is no part of this. She knows it, though her manner shows nothing, and she retires as soon as possible.*)

KNIGHT

To horse, gentlemen—to horse! Your Grace, the dance begins early.

JUDGE (*with severity*)

And ends early?

A KNIGHT (*playfully*)

Early in the morning, Judge.

(*The door shuts off the merry laughter of their au revours. ARTHUR, as part of the family, sees them out.*)

GRACE (*is glad to be at home and has heaps to tell. She throws her arms about her father*)

Oh, daddy, I'm so happy!

JUDGE

My little girl! Ah, Margaret—this is the second, fairest queen my eyes have seen. (*He kisses GRACE, then goes to MRS. CLAIRE, lifts her hand with courtly grace and kisses it. GRACE, running, kneels beside her mother's chair.*)

MRS. CLAIRE

Doctor, it is a great happiness to have a daughter whom much love has not spoiled, and a husband whom—(*She looks up at him and sighs happily.*)

(AUNT SALLIE, who has not been able to stay away, either, enters.)

DOCTOR

All this is terribly hard on us poor bachelors!

AUNT SALLIE (*who must be in it*)

Oh, Miss Grace! Oh, Lordy! Sho' yo' is lobely! Oh, Miss Grace, all de gals from de quarters am come to de kitchen fo' to see yo' in yo' gole crown. Won't yo' jess come an' let 'em speculate jess once on yo', Miss Grace?

GRACE (*no Northerner can understand her affectionate familiarity*)

Yes, indeed. And, mamsie, dear, you are to give all the house-folks leave to come over to the Newcombs to see the ball. Mrs. Newcomb said so.

AUNT SALLIE (*in a burst of joy*)

Hi, hi! Sho' dey will be glad!

GRACE

And, Doctor, if mamsie will go now, and get all ready for bed, Dole may roll her into our little sitting-room so she may help me dress. Oh, please, Doctor!

MRS. CLAIRE

Yes, Doctor, please.

(JUDGE rings the bell twice. This is the signal for DOLE, and she comes at once to MRS. CLAIRE, looking neither right nor left.)

DOCTOR

If Mrs. Claire will take a sleeping draught afterward.

(GRACE, with airy leave-taking, hurries away, AUNT SALLIE in adoring attendance.)

MRS. CLAIRE

Take me to my room, Dole. Will you come now, Doctor?

(She is rolled out by DOLE, who holds herself like an automaton. The DOCTOR, friendly and professional, follows, ARTHUR returning just in time to open door of MRS. CLAIRE'S room.)

JUDGE (*settling to his smoke again*)

Arthur, my boy, I have good news. I am going to sell the old place to Dr. Ainslee, and take Grace and her mother North.

ARTHUR

Good, only—

JUDGE

Only what?

ARTHUR

I should like to take Grace North, sir—if she will let me.

JUDGE (*deeply moved*)

Ask her, my boy—and good luck be with you.

ARTHUR

I'm afraid she won't have me. But . . . I want your permission to try.

JUDGE

And my blessing.

(GRACE re-enters just in time to see their firm handclasp, and perhaps draws her own conclusions.)

GRACE (*no one would guess how her heart beats*)

Conspiracy, I'll be bound! Daddy, you look guilty.

JUDGE (*taking her face between his hands*)

You have been happy here in the old home, daughter?

GRACE

Father! There are tears in your eyes.

JUDGE

Nonsense! Tears? When I look at you? (*But they are getting into his voice.*) Send Dr. Ainslee to the library when he comes in. I have business—politics, to talk over with him. (*He is rather in a hurry to get away, partly because of his eyes.*)

GRACE (*on the verge herself*)

Better take the oil if you are going to start the machine of politics (*meaning the decanter, which she offers him*).

JUDGE

Little rogue—and my best cigars—in the cabinet. (*He gives her the key to the cabinet. She leaves door ajar when she returns the key and hands him the cigars, but no one is thinking of doors.*) And mind! don't either of you venture to bother us. Let me see you in your royal robes, puss, before you go. (*Something in the droop of his shoulders, as he goes out, hurts GRACE.*)

GRACE

I know there were tears in daddy's eyes—

ARTHUR (*who is not thinking of the Judge*)

Grace— (*He gets no further, for the DOCTOR enters, followed by DOLE.*)

DOCTOR

Miss Grace, will you look after this medicine? Dole here understands the dose—three drops to half a glass of water; a tablespoonful to induce sleep.

DOLE (*professional and lifeless*)

Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Come to Miss Grace when what I left in Mrs. Claire's room is gone. (*Handing her the vial.*) Put it in a safe place, Miss Grace. It is a serious power.

GRACE

Oh, Doctor! (*She is just the kind of girl to dread drugs, and she takes the vial gingerly.*) Poison?

DOCTOR

Poison is an ugly word. The little vial contains a merciful product of nature. Properly applied it will induce a gentle sleep—a sleep in which troubles and cares and wrongs are forgotten and made well. Too much might make the sleep forever—that is all; don't call it poison!

GRACE (*fervently*)

I shall see it is kept safe, though. (*She is glad to see the cabinet door ajar, and hastens to put the vial there, snapping the door shut.*) There! It is locked in, and daddy has the key.

ARTHUR (*who is not thinking of vials*)

The Judge expects you in the library, sir.

DOCTOR

Oh, eh? Oh! (*Doctors, too, have intelligence.*)

GRACE (*she has a feminine instinct about Dole, and does not like her standing there*)

Is mamsie ready, Dole?

(DOCTOR and ARTHUR are talking, ARTHUR urgently.)

DOLE (*she has a feminine instinct about GRACE, and means to stay if she can*)

No, Miss Grace.

GRACE

Please hurry. And let me know as soon as mamsie is in the little sitting-room. (DOLE, like a wooden woman with live eyes, leaves. These are things a woman revenges.)

DOCTOR (*to whom Arthur has not been talking in vain*)

I understand the Judge wants me.

GRACE

Politics! (*Laughing and blushing.*) And once in that room there will be no help for you. When that door is shut, even I would lose my head, crown and all, if I so much as looked at it. (*The DOCTOR is much too wise to stay and talk, in spite of her pretty cordiality.*)

ARTHUR

At last!

GRACE

At last—what? (*This sort of remark always freezes a girl.*)

ARTHUR

Grace, I must talk quickly. The whole country seems possessed to come into this room— (*It's AUNT SALLIE who comes now, with an entirely unnecessary lamp.*)

AUNT SALLIE

Don't yo' want the lamp, Miss Grace?

ARTHUR (*violently*)

NO!

AUNT SALLIE

Fo' de Lawd! (*A younger woman might have dropped the lamp, but she retreats without catastrophe.*)

ARTHUR (*coming at once to the point*)

Grace, I love you. Will you be my wife? (*GRACE can only look at him, her heart leaps so.*) Will you be my wife, Grace? . . . I love you. (*She covers her face with her hands, and he hurries on.*) I've loved you a long time, dear. I went away without daring to tell you, because you made it clear you didn't care. I was a coward, and frightened. But I have had time to find courage. I made up my mind, between bullets out there in Cuba, that you are meant for me to take care of—whether you know it or not, dear—and it's my business to do it—if I can make you let me. I said to the good Lord, in the din of battle, if He'd let me get back to you I'd say my say, and try my try, and claim the right I know He has given me, Grace, to look after you—to guard you—to love you. That's why I got through the bullets, I think, dear. My life is meant to guard yours—and I have come back to do it.

GRACE

And to think—that you should come back—after I—

ARTHUR

That's so, dear. You were hard on me—but, since then, I've faced battle, murder and sudden death, sweetheart—learned to know that love is greater than them all—and I love you, my Queen—you can't object to my calling you "my queen." I made you Queen, didn't I, today? I came back for Love's sake—and for Love's sake I am yours, dear, even though you won't be mine. (*Manlike, he misunderstands her silence.*) Come! give me a kindly good-bye. (*GRACE begins to sob. He thinks he distresses her, and, in a flood of sympathy continues, tenderly.*) What is it, sweetheart? Have I spoken roughly? I didn't mean to. It's hard to give up what belongs to one, sweetheart—and you belong to me, though I am too stupid and clumsy to make you see it so.

GRACE (*breaking down pitifully*)

What's the goo—good asking a girl, and—and not letting her answer? (*She holds out her hand.*) Good-bye. You see I must mind you—and you said to say, "Good-bye."

ARTHUR (*quietly and earnestly*)

I am in earnest, Grace.

(GRACE puts her hand behind her, withdrawing the good-bye.)

GRACE (*her voice nearly steadied by his*)

So am I. Oh, Arthur, give me a chance to speak out my heart! I am not the foolish, vain, shallow-hearted girl I was when—when you went away. I have had my bullets, too, and there has been battle here—I, too, have learned—I am so proud—and so humble—so glad—so ashamed—all at once—that—I can't find words. Help me, Arthur.

ARTHUR (*who realizes it's all right*)

Grace! (*She comes to him seriously, womanly, laying her two hands in his.*)

GRACE (*with the clear, level eyes of first love's purity*)
I love you, Arthur. I am proud to be your wife. Oh! (*Not ready yet.*) Wait a little moment before you do that. . . . (*She draws away from his embrace.*) I want to tell you all the truth. I have learned—between my bullets—that I belong to you. I have prayed every night for you, just as if you had taken my promise with you. I never even hoped you would come back after I treated you so, but I kept myself sacred to you, to all thought of you—and I meant to—forever. You men think girls are good and pure because that is the law of our hearts. Perhaps it is the law, but that law is given us by love. We live that we may be pure and good and sacred when the one to whom we belong claims us. That is the unspoken thought in the heart of the girl even before she has seen the one to whom she belongs—the one by whom she wishes to be loved. It was the law in my heart before I saw you, Arthur; but after you went away I understood for whom I was to keep myself. It was for you, whether you should ever claim me or not. I belonged to you, my hands must be kept pure from any touch but yours—my whole heart open and white and clear from any thought but yours, else I should wish to die in the hour of your love—instead of knowing myself happy—as I know myself happy, now. I belong to you, to you, Arthur, to keep and guard. I love you.

ARTHUR (*awed before the girl's altars. His mother's face blends with hers*)
My pearl! . . . my Grace! (*He takes ring from chain.*) This my mother wore. Yours is as white a soul as hers. Unless yours, Grace, I vowed this ring should be no other's. May I put it on your finger, dear?

GRACE (*with sweet reverence*)
I could not live if ever wrong came to this sacred pearl.
(DOLE appears at door in time to see the ring placed on GRACE's finger.)

ARTHUR
Mine . . . forever. Through all chance . . . all time.
Mine to keep and guard through all.

DOLE (*her voice jarring harshly*)
Your mother's ready, Miss Grace.
GRACE (*confused and frightened*)
Oh! Oh, I forgot mamsie! I will come at once. (DOLE's look chills her.) Is my dressing lamp lighted, Dole?

DOLE (*in iron voice*)
I will ask Sallie. (*She retires, staring savagely.*)
GRACE (*a bit hysterically—Dole has frightened her*)
And daddy! What will he say?

ARTHUR
He said, "Good luck," when I asked him.
GRACE (*demurely, her heart steadied by his voice*)
And—and did you have good luck?

ARTHUR (*who does not mean to be cheated any longer*)
Not all I deserve. (*Her pretty gasp of shy willingness emboldens him, and he gathers her into his young, eager arms. She comes from the embrace stilled and glorified.*)

GRACE
Arthur! (*He kisses her forehead and says that word which, first heard, is benediction.*)

ARTHUR
My wife!
DOLE (*reappearing*)
Saul Carleton is waiting.

GRACE
I sha'n't have a moment to see him. Tell father. (AUNT SALLIE returns with lamp. She passes to GRACE's room, a cautious eye on ARTHUR. DOLE goes to call the JUDGE.) Don't let daddy be cross, Arthur. (ARTHUR kisses her hand. She hurriedly follows SALLIE, JUDGE enters, followed by DOLE, who, with eyes on ARTHUR, busies herself lighting the lamp.)

JUDGE (*very glad to be called*)
Well, my boy?
ARTHUR (*sacred awe still in his voice*)
All is well, father.

JUDGE (*heartily*)
Good!
DOLE
Saul Carleton's waiting.

JUDGE (*going*)
Yes, I'm coming.
DOLE (*still iron*)
What is well, Mr. Arthur? I said, "what is well?"

ARTHUR (*cheerily*)
Everything is, thank you, Dole. If Mrs. Claire can spare you, how would you like to come North with me to take care of the new home and help me take care of my wife?

DOLE
Oh! God help me! God help me! Listen to me just a minute (*fighting for the white of her soul*). You gave me my chance up North at school, sir. I learned all there was to learn up there, sir. I kept your face in front of me all the time, your words in my heart. "Give Dole a chance, Judge Claire," you said. "Give her a chance—she's worth it." I have been worth it, sir.

ARTHUR (*heartily*)
I'm sure of it.
DOLE
What do you think I did it for? Because of you. Because I love you—because I love you!

ARTHUR (*in horror*)
My child!
DOLE (*molten iron*)
No! I'm a woman—and I love you—I have a right to. What else did you send me North for—but to make myself worth you—worth your love? Oh, I've tried! You can't throw me aside now. Oh, God help me! All the girls up there thought me white. The men there—all of them—looked at me like as if I was white—took their hats off to me in the street. The girls' brothers begged to know me—I've had them look at me—like you looked at her—at Grace Claire just now. Then it was I knew why you'd sent me to have my chance. I kept myself good for you, worked and studied, had no thought but you—you—you—that I was yours, that you meant me to be—

ARTHUR (*the white race speaks*)
What do you mean?
DOLE
I am white; you know it, and you knew then what I only learned today, who my white kin is. You know the blood that strains at my heart now is good blood as there is. You knew I could make myself fit for you if I just had the chance—you let me have it—now I won't let it go—no! Not because the doll face and blue eyes you've just looked into have made you forget! I'm as good as she is—yes! And I love you better than she can, and—

ARTHUR (*the white man speaks*)
Silence!
DOLE
No! I'm stronger, handsomer, cleverer than she. You loved me. . . . Yes, yes you did! Or why did you send me North to make myself fit for you? You loved me before you ever thought of her. Look at me—remember. . . . Ah, honey—let me have my chance! . . . Take me North, . . . where they think me white. You'll see the men look at me there, and you'll be proud that I'm your wife. . . . Oh, I'll make you happy. I'll love you as no white woman was ever made to love. . . . You'll forget everything but me. . . . Take me anywhere. Keep me here, . . . here where I'm trod down, . . . and I'll love you still. I'll love you like a slave, . . . like my black mammy knew how to love. I'll take care of you. . . . You won't have to lift your hand. Oh, God help me! God help me! (*She grovels at his feet.*) Save me! Let me have my chance!

ARTHUR
You're mad!
DOLE (*springing up*)
Don't you pity me! Don't dare! I am mad! I love you! . . . I want you, you, you! . . . to hurt, . . . to tear, . . . to kill! (JUDGE is heard speaking at the door.)

ARTHUR
Be silent!
(JUDGE enters, followed by SAUL.)
DOLE (*at bay*)
Judge Claire, send me away. . . . I want to get North . . . and take care of myself. . . . I've got to. . . . I say I've got to, . . . and I've got a right to your help.

JUDGE (*the white South speaks*)
What are you talking about?
ARTHUR (*because Saul is there*)
Sir—

JUDGE (*to Saul*)
You can sign the necessary papers about Henry Clay at any time. That's all now.

DOLE
No! You stay, Saul Carleton! . . . He knows what I say is true. Yaller Kate, that used to be Claire's Kate, in your father's time here, is dead. I know who I am. . . . I've done being trod down. You take care of your other daughter, don't you?—you queen her and crown her! I . . . I don't ask anything . . . but to save myself, . . . and you've got to help me do it. The white in me you put there. I'm your blood child as much as she is, an' you know it!

JUDGE
God!
SAUL
You'd best hark to her. Gib us \$3,000, Judge, suh, an' I'll marry her an' keep her quiet. She kin prove what she says by me, . . . and it would be a pity for her pretty sister, Grace—

JUDGE
Damnation! (*He strikes SAUL across the face with riding crop.*) Go! Never enter here again! (*He turns to DOLE.*) Get back to your place. As long as you are reasonable you shall be looked after, as you always have been. Let me hear any more of this raving, and I will turn you out of doors, like this other insipid nigger! (*He sees SAUL still there.*) Go!
(SAUL slouches toward the door and out.)

"BRUSHOFF" BLACK TAFFETA. DUST PROOF.

JUDGE (to Arthur)
Arthur! Don't judge—hear me. (*With face covered he gropes toward library.*) "Retribution! Retribution!" (ARTHUR follows.)

DOLE (alone)
Nigger! Nigger! Oh, I'm done gone mad! (*She rushes to door. Her manner has changed entirely. She calls in husky whispers, glancing back to where JUDGE and ARTHUR went out.*) Saul! Saul Carleton! Come back! I want yo'! (SAUL returns, his face transformed with rage.)

SAUL (through grating teeth)
I've got ter kill him!

DOLE
I'll do better than that by you.

ACT THIRD

MRS. CLAIRE'S sitting-room. A pretty, dainty room between Mrs. CLAIRE'S bedroom and her daughter's. It opens directly into the general sitting-room, which was the scene of the last act. From it is a door to the attic store-room, and there is a muslined window looking out on the way the escort will come to take the Queen to the ball.

The wall-paper is rose-twined, rose ribbons are at the window, the simple furniture has been painted with white enamel paint from up North, and the effect in general is fresh and dainty. A prettily rose-shaded, tall lamp is near the table, on which are books and sewing things. Over by the door into the sitting-room is a little stand on which are the candles GRACE and her mother use to go to bed by. Tonight GRACE'S room is bright with a lamp because she is dressing for the ball. MRS. CLAIRE is wheeled on in her chair by DOLE. She is all fluttering with eagerness, and looks very pretty and pink, her white hair gathered in a pink-bowed, dainty cap, a pink double gown over her nightgown, her knees tucked away under a white shawl, and a little shawl over her shoulders. A muslin-cased, pink-ribbed pillow is behind her. Her hands twirl a lace-edged handkerchief, and her voice is sweet and quavering. She lifts it to be heard through GRACE'S open door.

MRS. CLAIRE
Do hurry, Grace; I am so impatient to see you. Look your prettiest, darling. Is she going in the carriage, Dole? Where's my pillow, Dole?

DOLE (who is restless and watchful)
I don't know, Mrs. Claire. 'Deed, you oughtn't to be up like this. (*She fixes the pillow.*)

MRS. CLAIRE
Oh, I couldn't let her go without seeing her in her party dress. Seems like only yesterday I was Queen, just like her today; and yet, think of me now! never to walk again! never to walk again! (*She weeps a little.*) Where's my handkerchief, Dole?

DOLE
You have it.

GRACE (from her room)
Mamsie, I don't like the way your voice sounds. Don't you dare be anything but happy tonight, when I'm so happy.

MRS. CLAIRE (wiping her eyes daintily)
I won't, darling; I won't. Who is going to be in the house, Dole, after Miss Grace is gone?

DOLE
The Judge and the Doctor are in the library.

MRS. CLAIRE (relieved)
Oh, they're not going! I'm so glad! I get so afraid to even think of being in the house alone! Where's my smelling salts, Dole? (DOLE goes for the smelling salts.) Grace, whom are you going to the Carletons with? You better have your father go along, too—the Doctor will be here, right enough, so's the house won't be alone. I'd rather have your father go with you.

GRACE
Oh, you dear, foolish mamsie! How could I be safer than with Arthur? And besides, I'm Queen—don't you remember that? And I shall have a beautiful, grand escort, with Freddy and Will, all in their pink sashes, and other Knights, too. Whatever could happen to me, do you suppose?

(DOLE returns with vinaigrette.)

MRS. CLAIRE (sniffing at salts)
Oh, I don't know. I do have such feelings about you, Grace, if you aren't right in my sight. Do you think she's going to be all safe this evening, Dole?

DOLE
I reckon. Miss Grace, yo' mother oughtn't to be up like this; she's real tired.

GRACE
I'll come at once. I want to talk to her just a minute. (GRACE runs in from her room. She has not waited to finish dressing, but over her white ball skirt has slipped a long, loose-sleeved white wrapper; from its fastening at the throat her bare neck shows above the line of her dainty undergarment; her white-stockinged feet are in dancing slippers.) You shall finish my hair for me, mamsie; then I'll put on my waist. (*She pushes a stool to her mother's chair. Her hair is partly down; she carries a white ribbon and some hairpins.*) No one dresses my hair as prettily as you do, mamsie; and while you do it I want to tell you something.

DOLE
Shall I get your bed ready, Mrs. Claire?
MRS. CLAIRE (querulous)
When I have done with Miss Grace's hair. Darling, I want you to wear the ivory comb that I wore years ago, when I was Queen.
GRACE

Oh, you sweet mamsie!

MRS. CLAIRE
It's up in the big black trunk, Dole, in the store-room—the trunk isn't locked. There's a green box to the left as you open the trunk; bring the box down just as it is. Be careful of the candle. (DOLE takes one of the candles. When she opens the door the stairs to attic show.) Some of the roses your father gave me that night are in the box, Grace. It was that night he told me he loved me—(GRACE turns, hiding her face against her mother's shoulder; her arms holding her.) Why, my pretty one, what is it?

GRACE
I'm so happy, mother—just as you were—then—

MRS. CLAIRE
Not? Oh, my little girl, my little girl! (*She begins to weep.*)
GRACE (kneeling and gently pulling away her mother's hands and drying her eyes)

And to think that you should have the heart to cry! Shame, shame, mamsie!

MRS. CLAIRE
God bless you, pretty one! (*She holds GRACE'S face in her hands.*) So pretty, so sweet—and only a little while ago my baby here in my arms; and now, not mine any more!

GRACE
And you haven't even asked me who—
MRS. CLAIRE (all breathless)
Quick, tell me! Not?

GRACE
Oh, yes, mother! Who should it be but Arthur? (*She buries her face in her mother's lap.*)

MRS. CLAIRE (with mother-dignity)
Had I chosen for you, daughter, it would have been Arthur. I was afraid—

GRACE
Yes, I know, mother, but he understands now. I think I'm glad that I came so near losing him—it has made me understand my own heart better. All this long year he has been away I have learned to know how I really love him. Oh, mamsie, darling, I'm afraid sometimes—I wonder if it is wrong to care as I do. There seems to me to be no good thing in the world now that I could understand were it not because of Arthur. My eyes can see nothing beautiful without seeming to see it through Arthur. My love for those I loved long ago, even for you, seems now to take depth and warmth from the love of him in my heart. He seems to be to me the explanation and cause for everything that is right, I kneel by my bed at night, and when I would say, "Our Father," it is "Arthur" that comes to my lips! Oh, mamsie, is it wicked? is it wrong?

MRS. CLAIRE
No, sweetheart, it is right.

GRACE
And, mamsie— (DOLE returns just as GRACE is about to show ring.)

DOLE
Here's the box—shall I get your bed ready now?

GRACE (jarred by Dole's manner, speaks with gentle authority)
In a moment, Dole. (DOLE hands MRS. CLAIRE the box.)

MRS. CLAIRE
Thank you, Dole. (DOLE stands sullenly back of the chair, ready to roll it. GRACE is restless, she does not know why.)

GRACE
Dole, will you get my bunch of lilies from the sitting-room? I'll put them on here. Be sure not to disturb father.

DOLE (sullenly)
It's getting right late, Miss Grace.

GRACE (steadily)
Please do as I ask, quickly, then— (DOLE goes out.)

GRACE
Dole does act so queer, doesn't she, mamsie? How I wish she hadn't interrupted! I—can't get my thoughts together again—it was this; I wanted to show you this, mamsie. (MRS. CLAIRE has the box open and is dreaming over it.)

MRS. CLAIRE
It seems only yesterday. He was so handsome, Jack was—and now—it is my Grace—and—Arthur.

GRACE (coaxing and insistent)
Look at my pretty ring, mother. See—a pearl!—his mother wore it. She was as dear to him as you to me, mamsie darling. He put her ring on my finger. It is to be mine—a pearl for all goodness, dear. It seems to me that even one little half thought that was not Arthur's would mar its whiteness; and yet (*she laughs shyly and sweetly*), yet I'm not afraid to wear it, for no such thought will ever come. Ah, mamsie, you said it was not wrong to care

DELBECK CHAMPAGNE.

Brut and Extra Dry, Delmonico Half pinta.
Highest grade imported.

as I do—I ought to want to be good because of you—and because of my own heart—and—because of the dear God, but—it is only because of Arthur. If ever this pearl should be marred, I should die. It would seem to me easier to face God, with wrong upon me, than to face Arthur.

MRS. CLAIRE

No wrong will ever come to you, pretty, sweet one, nor mar to the pearl. (DOLE returns, carrying the lilies in a vase.)

DOLE

Shall Mrs. Claire go now?

GRACE

Why, yes, Dole. Put the lilies on the table. (DOLE obeys.) You must be good and go to bed now, dear. (She begins to push the chair toward her mother's room.) I hope you didn't disturb papa or the Doctor, Dole.

DOLE (with tight lips)

They're shut, all safe from any disturbing, in the library.

GRACE (brightly)

That's good.

DOLE

Yes. (She comes swiftly and takes the chair.) It's getting along to be late, Miss Grace.

GRACE

Dear, dear! Yes, I've been gossiping with you, mamsie, and my escort will be here before I'm ready.

DOLE (sharply)

Are the Knights coming to take you to the Carletons'?

GRACE (standing at her door and speaking merrily into her mother's room, where Dole has rolled Mrs. Claire's chair)

Yes, indeed—am I not the Queen of Love and Beauty? And suppose any harm should come to me! Oh, the Queen of Love and Beauty must be taken great care of, mustn't she, mamsie? Lift her right into bed, Dole, and out with the candle. Good-night, darling. You didn't finish my hair, either. (She laughs, twisting up her hair.) Good-night. (DOLE returns, stands irresolute.)

DOLE (carefully)

Lulu has come with—with some paper fur Henry Clay—she's in the kitchen.

GRACE

I thought all the maids had gone to look on at the ball.

DOLE

They are. 'Cept Lulu—she came back with the paper. She's in the kitchen waitin' to see you.

GRACE

She'll have to come here—I'm so late about my dressing. Tell her so.

DOLE (staggered)

Here?

GRACE

Yes, here. (She is dreaming over the ring as she slowly goes to her room. DOLE wavers, looking at GRACE, whose back is to her. Then she turns stealthily. Her glance slides to the open door of Mrs. CLAIRE's room. She crosses silently and closes the open door; then, her baleful eyes never leaving GRACE, she goes out into the general sitting-room, leaving the door carefully ajar behind her.)

GRACE (softly to herself)

Ah, dear God! Let me be all I want to be, for the sake of this holy love you have given me! (She kisses the ring reverently.)

(The door, left ajar by DOLE, opens suddenly, silently. SAUL enters. He stands, a black bulk, in the doorway. His eyes glare about the room, their lids widening at sight of GRACE. The door closes tight behind him without sound. DOLE does it. His head thrusts heavily forward, and he swings silently toward GRACE, as if he sees nothing else. His course takes him against the table, which his bulk jars, upsetting the vase. At the sound GRACE turns, he crushes the table aside, and her cry is smothered under his hand, while his clutch stops her throat. Mrs. CLAIRE's voice sounds, sharply, "Grace!" SAUL, with head sunk, glares toward her room. Then he pushes GRACE backward through the open door behind her. The shutting door snaps sharply. There is utter silence—then a single mad cry from GRACE. Mrs. CLAIRE's door opens. With horrid rigidity she walks swiftly toward her daughter's room. She is more than half-way there when she swerves and, without a cry or struggle, falls dead. The lilies are near her as she lies still and face down. The KNIGHTS are returning, and their song sounds faintly through the window. DOLE enters from the sitting-room, crouched, ashen and shivering. She spreads her hands as if to keep off Mrs. CLAIRE, as she scurries to rattle the door-knob of GRACE's room. Then she retreats to the window and drags the light curtain over it. The song loudens. SAUL enters. Her eyes show him the dead body. He goes wide of his way to keep from it, then lunges toward the sitting-room door, where at that moment a knocking sounds. DOLE flings open the attic door, and SAUL lurches through it.)

JUDGE (from the sitting-room)

She's in her room. Grace! (He knocks again. DOLE closes attic door, setting her back against it. She glares toward the sitting-room. Her nails dig into the wood behind her.)

ACT FOURTH

In the sitting-room again. The other side of the door where the JUDGE is knocking. The JUDGE and ARTHUR, and the DOCTOR have been summoned from the library by the KNIGHTS' song.

JUDGE (to Arthur, who goes toward outer door)

Ask the noble escort of our Queen to enter—I'll go speak to Grace, my knocking might waken her mother.

ARTHUR

Come in, comrades.

(JUDGE CLAIRE passes into Mrs. CLAIRE's sitting-room, the scene of the last act. KNIGHTS enter with cheery confusion; only the DOCTOR hears the sharp call of the JUDGE. He starts and listens.)

JUDGE (speaks for the second time from Mrs. Claire's sitting-room)

Phil! Phil! come to my wife!

DOCTOR

Gentlemen, something has happened to Mrs. Claire. (ARTHUR and the KNIGHTS come to silence instantly.)

PINK KNIGHT

Is Mrs. Claire worse?

ARTHUR

We all saw her here a little while ago. (He goes to door; it is ajar. He speaks without opening it.) Uncle, can I do anything? (JUDGE enters.)

JUDGE (struggling for self-control)

Gentlemen, my wife—will someone ride for help? My wife! (DOCTOR follows.) Not dead, Phil? Not dead?

DOCTOR (with professional quiet, gently)

Old friend, you have known the end was near. Bear it with courage. Gentlemen, Mrs. Claire is dead!

ARTHUR

Does Grace know?

DOCTOR

I think not. Arthur—the Judge. (The DOCTOR's quiet is in great contrast to the excitement of the others.)

(ARTHUR goes to the JUDGE.)

JUDGE

But my wife—there! So far from her room!

DOCTOR

Will one of you gentlemen assist me here? (DOCTOR and PINK KNIGHT pass into Mrs. CLAIRE's sitting-room.)

ARTHUR

For the sake of Grace, dear uncle; she will need your courage and her own.

PINK KNIGHT

I'll ride over for mother and sister—they'll come at once.

A KNIGHT

You might want to send to the village for something—I'll tell them at the stable to have a couple of horses saddled—

ANOTHER KNIGHT

We must let the Newcombs know—and the ladies—

THIRD KNIGHT

If we can do anything—

JUDGE

What happened to take her from her room? How could she walk so far? Good God! to die like that, and me within call! (The KNIGHTS go. PINK KNIGHT returns from Mrs. CLAIRE's sitting-room.)

ARTHUR

Does Grace know?

PINK KNIGHT

We hope not—she's in her room; the girl Dole is with her.

JUDGE

My poor child! poor child! (DOCTOR enters.)

ARTHUR

What of Grace?

DOCTOR

Quietly in her room. (Rings the bell.) I sent Dole to her. (Enter AUNT SALLIE.) Sallie, go call Dole, then wait there in the sitting-room till I come; don't leave. (AUNT SALLIE hastens out.) Control yourself, Jack—Grace will hear it best from you. (DOLE comes in. She stands at bay; her eyes seek escape.)

DOCTOR

Well? (She does not answer.) How did you find Miss Grace?

DOLE

Miss Grace—?

DOCTOR

Speak, girl! Does Miss Grace know about her mother?

DOLE

I—I don't know. I came in the sitting-room—just—just about when the Judge came in. I—I heard his knocking, and—

JUDGE

What happened to my wife?

DOLE

I—I don't know. I only came in when you—

ARTHUR

And Grace—

DOLE (with rising panic)

I say I don't know—I don't know—I don't know nothing at all 'bout it.

COKE DANDRUFF CURE NEVER FAILS.

DOCTOR (*very quietly*)

The girl is confused. Grace has probably fainted. She heard her mother fall—or a cry—and guessed. Don't be alarmed; I will go to her—a faint is merciful in such a case.

DOLE (*springing to doorway*)

Yes, Doctor, that's it—Miss Grace fainted. I did all right by her—I picked her up—and laid her on the couch. I know what to do for fainting—and—

ARTHUR (*with decision*)

I must go to her—

DOLE (*violently*)

She don't want you—she told me to say so. Here; this is from off her finger—you'd best leave!

ARTHUR (*taking the ring*)

Leave!

DOCTOR

My boy, this is all nonsense. The poor child is upset by the shock of her mother's death. Stand aside, girl! (DOCTOR goes out.)

JUDGE (*to Dole*)

Why are you staring like that?

DOLE

I'se skeered—fo' Gawd, I'se skeered. What they's gwine do to me?

JUDGE

What happened?

ARTHUR

Father, the pearl is broken! (He lets ring fall. DOCTOR re-enters. He stands, a terrible figure, in the doorway. DOLE screams.)

JUDGE

Phil!

DOCTOR

The bell!

JUDGE

Grace?

ARTHUR

Dead?

DOCTOR

Not dead—not DEAD! (He plunges to outside door.)

ARTHUR

God! (DOLE intercepts him.)

DOLE

He ain't there—he ain't there!

ARTHUR

Who? (DOLE flings herself at the JUDGE's feet. Bell clangs outside. Its clangor continues till entrance of KNIGHTS.)

DOLE

Stop the bell—stop the bell! He ain't done it—he ain't done it!

JUDGE (*conviction flashing on him*)

Saul! (DOLE screams. SAUL enters.)

ARTHUR (*coming toward the Judge*)

Saul!

SAUL

Judge Claire, I am innocent—I demand your protection!

JUDGE

Saul Carleton, you are guilty—and, by God, my protection you shall have! Arthur, stop that bell; help me protect this man!

DOLE

Horses—horses! (She rushes off through kitchen.)

ARTHUR

Not with ten thousand devils in my arm! The man belongs to me to kill.

JUDGE (*intercepting Arthur, who struggles to reach Saul*)

The man belongs to the law—I am the law—stand back! (Confused noise outside; bell still clangs. JUDGE takes a pistol from pocket. SAUL screams, groveling in negro panic at the JUDGE's feet.)

SAUL

Don't kill me—don't kill me!

DOLE (*returning*)

The horses—the horses—yo' kin git away. (She bars the outside door.)

JUDGE

The law shall have you, though my life protect yours! Come! (JUDGE pushes SAUL before him through kitchen door. ARTHUR springs to unbar outside door, at which there is pounding.)

DOLE

Don't let them in; they'll kill me! (She clings about his knees.) Aw, Gawd! It's all yo' fault—yo' oughter have some mercy on me! It's all yo' fault!

ARTHUR

Out of the way, or I'll kill you!

DOLE

You have killed me—you've killed all there was in me, an' I've had my revenge. She's no better now than my mother was. She's no better now than I am—than I am. Youse done turn my white soul into black—black. Aw, honey! don' go fo' to look at me lak dat; I ain't nuffin' but a po' nigger. What yo' tink I'se gwine to do when I hab ma soul tore out? (Shouts and beating at the door.

The bell stops.) Aw, save me, Massa Arthur—save me! Deyse gwine kill me! (ARTHUR flings her from door. She falls to her knees while ARTHUR is opening the door. DOLE sees the ring on the floor. She stealthily picks it up.)

ARTHUR (*opening the door*)

Here, here!

DOLE

It's gole—it's gole. I kin git money, an' git away. The pearl's broke, but it'll do for me.

(Doors thrown open. KNIGHTS enter.)

DOLE

Youse done come too late. He's cl'ar away. He's done got cl'ar away. (She rushes out through kitchen door.)

KNIGHTS

Who?

ARTHUR

Saul Carleton. Quick! to the stables!

(All rush out. Confused noise, dying gradually into silence. AUNT SALLIE enters.)

SALLIE (*chattering with fear*)

Yes, missie, I'se gwine. Oh, fo' de Lord! De Doctor done tell me to stay. I'se gwine, missie—I'se gwine. I'se afeard—I'se afeard. Oh, my Lordy! dey ain't no light. I'se skeered ob de dark kitchen. (She comes back and takes lamp.) Yes, missie; yes, missie. I'se gwine fo' to set in de kitchen. (Goes out, taking lamp. The room is left in soft light as from half-shadowed moonlight that comes through the thin curtains at window.)

GRACE enters from the little sitting-room. She wears the loose white gown of the last act. Her feet are in white stockings; her hair is partly loosened, but not disheveled. She is pale, but her face is perfectly still. Her step is strange, her movements labored and slow. It is as if the body were dead, and carried with difficulty by the spirit, alive only to the need of escaping from it. When she speaks the words come shaped carefully, as by stiff lips. Her voice is lifeless, and almost without inflection. It has a piteous, childlike, level clearness. There is no trace in any way of distraction. There is rather an awful presence and calm of mind and stillness of body.

Her eyes search about the room. Then light comes into her face; she walks slowly, with leaden step, but without staggering or any unnecessary gesture, to the wall cabinet wherein she placed the poison in Act II. When she finds it locked, she passes her hands over the glass. Seeing her face in mirror of cabinet she begins to breathe in short gasps. Holding her face from her own mirrored eyes with her left hand, she thrusts her right hand through the glass, which shatters noisily. She withdraws her hand with vial; her hand is stained slightly with red; she shrinks a few steps from the cabinet, and moans a little when she sees the red on her hand. Goes towards her room.

Tumult rises outside. She stops and turns, standing in the doorway. The tumult grows. ARTHUR's voice outside, "Not that way; the man is mine!" Voices, in confusion yell that he shall die within sight of all. GRACE listens as if turned to stone, her figure gradually growing rigid. Tumult. SAUL's voice in panic. Outside door is flung open. ARTHUR enters. He closes it, and starts back at sight of GRACE. She neither sees nor hears him. A faint pink glow shows at curtain of window. GRACE, with a great sigh, as if of returning life, stands suddenly tall and strong. ARTHUR, seeing the glow, cries, "Grace!" and starts toward her, as if to protect her. She neither sees nor hears him; she places vial in bosom, and with strong, swift step crosses down to window and sweeps back the curtain. ARTHUR stands motionless.

GRACE

Ah, the good fire! the good fire! (She spreads her hands toward the glare, then, reaching her arms back of her, seems, with face uplifted toward the red, to strain as if toward something life-giving.) It shines bright! I see his face, clearly, clearly! (She speaks slowly and understandingly, her face without emotion. Tumult of cries, through which SAUL's shrieks cut sharp. She steps back a little, nodding her head gravely. She takes vial from her bosom.) In a little while he will be dead. Then I can die. (There is utter weariness in her voice, but no trace of violence or passion or madness.) It is good of God to let me see him die, like that—first.

ARTHUR (*with great tenderness and caution, as to one asleep, whom he fears to wake suddenly*)

Beloved, come away!

(At his voice behind her a piteous change comes over her face. She hides the vial in her dress again. She lifts her hands, dragging her face down. Then, her face covered, she shrinks downward till she rests against the floor.)

ARTHUR

Grace, come with me, child. It is I—Arthur.

GRACE

I shall go mad! (This meeting she had thought to escape.) Will you please go away? There is no one who has the right to look upon my living face. You shall not see it, even dead!

ARTHUR

My poor darling! Let me take you away from everyone! Your eyes shall never rest upon a face they know!

GRACE (*who has crouched away from him, lifting to her elbows, speaks with solemn pathos*)

My eyes shall never rest upon a face they know. I tell you, if you touch me I shall go mad.

ARTHUR

Listen, beloved—my beloved! It is my own I bid you give into my keeping. Where should you turn, if not to me?

GRACE

There is nowhere, and to you last in all the world. Do not think I am ashamed to look at you. For me—there—is—no—shame. I have loved you. I, who am forever swept of love, would not profane things sacred by my touch or look. I shall go mad!

ARTHUR

You are mine! Poor, bruised child! Mine now, as always. I will take you from all eyes.

GRACE

There are no eyes but yours. There is no pity I may not take but yours. This poor body may be the scoff of all the world, if I can only hide my soul from you. Go!

ARTHUR

Grace, listen. Understand. Love is mightier than the chance of this poor life. You are mine—sacred, bruised body, and soul forever sacred. Love's own is his through all time. You are mine forever, and mine now—here is your refuge. My soul enfolds you.

GRACE (solemnly, to herself)

God speaks.

ARTHUR

Our souls are one forever, for now my arm is between you and the world—my heart teaching yours to beat again, my life making you to live. This is my right—the right of Love. Come! (He would lift her into his arms. She rises to her knees, her back always to him, holding his hand against her breast, her head still bowed.)

CURTAIN.

GRACE

I hear. I understand. I know myself again. And I know love leaves me no rights here. A woman is sacred, my beloved. And all sacredness is gone from me. This remnant of life must not pollute the eternal truth of love. The rights that make women sacred here cannot be mine. I may not lift my lips to love. I dare not hold a child upon my heart. Yet, in this supremest hour of death, I understand the "forever" you have said. I see love mightier than the chance of this poor life. I know myself forever yours; forever sacred. I shall look into your face some day, beloved, to say this—but now—the corruption of these eyes may not see you. (She takes the poison. She is on her knees, he erect, as he faces the future her words seem to show. She lays the vial down quietly. Her face begins to lighten.)

ARTHUR

I will be patient. I will wait. I will serve and guard you from afar, if need be. You shall know, hour by hour, that Love is the Master of all chance—and the Power of the Master is the Power of God.

(GRACE rises, her back still to him. She speaks with solemn sweetness.)

GRACE

I understand. (She sways a little, drawing the drapery across her face. ARTHUR, holding her, places her in chair. Her face is covered. The JUDGE and the DOCTOR enter.)

ARTHUR (strong for the future his new manhood sees)

Father, all is well!

DOCTOR (picking up the vial—sees it empty)

All is well!



THE YEAR IN THE DRAMA



BY CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER

"A plague o' both your houses."

HUMBUG has become the dominant note in the jangle and haggle of the theatre. It is out of memory since the student or mere onlooker of the drama has had to hear so much cant and flim-flam. The rivalry of managers for profit and prestige, the envy and jealousy of actors, the pose of pharisaism, the convictions of advocates of the respective opponents, or maybe their prejudices or interests or innate blackguardism—for blackguardism certainly prompted some recent utterances of fleeting notoriety—riot in a babel in which the whimpers of Truth vanquished and her whoops victorious are hopelessly confused.

The pot keeps calling the kettle black, or, let us say for euphemism, the cup keeps denying that the saucer is white, with a persistence that can come only from self-delusion or fraud prepense. It is about time we set ourselves right regarding the actual complexion of things pertaining to the theatre; shams left undisturbed too long swell into nuisances.

"The drama has no future. It has gone to the dogs," one of the most famous actors in America proclaimed a few days ago. He lamented the growing disinclination on the part of the people of the theatre to work for art's sake. He railed at the plan, which he seemed to deem distinctly of today, of conducting theatrical enterprises mainly with an eye to material profit. His arraignment of the existing conditions in his calling was so frank and fervid that it was bound to start sympathetic consideration, until one recalled that this particular apostle of art for art's sake had for the past quarter of a century been devoting his talents and attainments to the presentation of the antiquated melodrama "Monte Cristo." With a company made up of obscure actors, with shabby scenery and generally mean appointments, he has been diffusing dramatic sweetness and light throughout the country for twenty-five years, through the medium of a play whose turgidity and tawdriness were already a jest of the preceding generation. In spite of his professed devotion to the higher flights of his calling, the policy he has pursued of presenting a cheap play in the cheapest possible way has resulted in continual profit, and made him one of the richest actors in the world. He could easily and securely have established a theatre that would have worked mightily to ward off the evils that have seized the drama, according to his diagnosis. Why didn't he do it? He is not only an accomplished actor, in the ways peculiar to his school, but he is also a popular player with a certain class of theatre-goers. His wealth has been beyond danger of serious impairment for many years. Why hasn't he employed this rare equipment in the cause for which he professes such warm concern? And with what grace can an actor prate of the "art"

of the theatre, who, to general knowledge, has done nothing for twenty-five years but amass a fortune from the presentation of "Monte Cristo"?

An English actor of the second rate, now playing in this city, has just piped his protest against conditions that he pretends to be distinctively characteristic of our stage. Especially hostile to the development of the drama along nobler lines is the long—and prolonged—"run" that he finds in vogue here. This, in the opinion of our mentor from across the seas, is one of the most malefic products of the commercial spirit that rules in the American theatre, for it not only cribs and confines the faculties of the actors, but it discourages the discovery of new plays. All of which fine-sounding patter might be quite impressive under certain conditions. But it falls rather flat coming from an actor-manager whose proud boast is that the amiable triviality in which he has been showing himself to New Yorkers for several months he had presented in London for five hundred nights. This extraordinary record he will doubtless endeavor to repeat in this country. The simple little play, and the gentle little way in which it is presented, have found much favor with our theatre-goers, and it would seem as if the only thing liable to prevent the second-rate English "artist" giving the show here for five hundred nights is his loudly heralded conviction that such long runs are hurtful to the drama. He is one of the very rich actors of the world; he manages his own theatrical ventures, and is thus relieved of any of the commercial influences that ordinarily beset his confrères. So there is nothing to keep him from pursuing his ambitions for new and more considerable achievements. Why didn't he begin some time ago? If he really believes that the theatre should despise schemes of profit, why does this second-rate English actor continue the unbroken "run" of the homely comedietta which has enriched almost everyone concerned—with the exception of the author? He, it is well known, was induced by the thoroughly uncommercial "artist" in reference to surrender his work for a sum so small that it is deemed unfit for publication. A mere detail this, of course, but yet pertinent and illuminative.

Whichever way the student of the theatre turns humbug confronts him. On whichever side of the raging factions he starts to ally himself he meets cant and brazen inconsistency. Convinced that the dramatized novel is cramping the vitals of original drama, he turns his back on the element in management that grasps the advantage of such popular books as "Richard Carvel," "To Have and To Hold," "Under Two Flags," "Janice Meredith" and "Ben Hur," only to find himself face to face with opposing ranks exploiting "The Christian," "A Gentleman of France," "Children of the Ghetto," "The Palace of the King," "The Bonnie Brier Bush," "Miranda of the Balcony," and what-not of "the best sellers of the day," as the literary experts of the hour hail them.

COKE DANDRUFF CURE NEVER FAILS.

Despairing, finally, of meeting even approximate faith on either side of the contending managers, he selects for his white-plumed guide the player who has done most valiant lip-service in behalf of the original drama. "Here is one," he argues to himself, "whom genius and achievement make independent of such vicarious advertisement as comes with the use of a popular book distorted to stage purposes. Here is a player who can securely prove consistent in the fight against the dramatized novel." But, alas! there rises up instantly the recollection that this player's efforts and achievements ever since the beginning of the momentous and more familiar struggle of "art" against "commercialism" have been confined to the scenic translation of characters created and made famous by novelists.

Evidently the man with convictions in this matter of the dramatized novel—a subject that has inspired a large part of the theatrical humbug of the past year—cannot honestly fly his banner with either side in the contention. So he resigns himself to the philosophers and pessimists and poseurs and *laudatores temporis acti*, who denounce the scheme of turning widely known books into plays as a vicious fad of the moment, a token of the degradation of the contemporary theatre.

But there again he stands on unstable ground. For back of the group with which he would align himself hover the ghosts of some of the most admired and cherished devices of the drama—"Jane Eyre," "East Lynne," "Moths," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Bleak House," "Oliver Twist," "Monte Cristo," "Aurora Floyd," "Mysteries of Paris," "Dombey and Son"—with Burton sensational as *Captain Cuttle*—"Jack Sheppard," "Fanchon the Cricket," "Rip Van Winkle," and on through a practically endless list, including all the more popular novels of Fenimore Cooper, Charles Dickens, Eugene Sue, Alexander Dumas, Harrison Ainsworth, Charles Lever, Samuel Lover, who gave John Drew *père* the ever-memorable rôle of *Handy Andy*. Against such a catalogue, thrown together haphazard from names uppermost in memory, what becomes of the cant that plays from books are impertinences peculiar to the moment? It goes along with the rest of the humbugs, with which insincerity, envy, disappointment, pose and fraud try patience beyond silent endurance.

Perhaps the most arrant humbug of all is the claim, by one faction or another in the raging quarrel, of exclusive regard for delicacy and morality in theatrical representations. Therein, I believe, lies the climactic irritation that impelled this ungrateful protest against the smug hypocrisy that has come to rule discussions of the subject. A review of *The First-Nighter's* columns for the past five years will show conclusively that there has been no mincing of words nor compromise of spirit in dealing with offenses against the cleanliness of the stage, no matter what their source or the potency of their exploitation; so no one can decently question the motive of deriding the pretension of any particular faction to unswerving correctness.

The impudence of the pretense, in some instances, is really droll in its audacity—and, it may be added, disgusting in its fraud. I have in mind one commentator whose critical screeds, in a little illustrated weekly, fairly bulge with indignation when anything indelicate or salacious is offered in the theatre. Well, it happened, a while ago, that he arranged an entertainment for some "charity" patronized by his journal, and he planned the entertainment for the especial delectation of women and children of the polite world. As the chief and certain "attraction" in his programme he engaged the most indecent variety performer that the town afforded—a woman whose "act" was so elaborately vile and so brazenly shocking that even when presented in the beer-halls frequented by the fast it evoked police interference. I recall the paralyzing horror with which the audience, largely of women and children, stared at the beginning of her swinish exhibition in the theatre of the Waldorf, and then the panic with which they rushed from the place. And all this was the work of a man who bemoans the contaminating influence of the Parisian farces on the American drama! Who, when a "charity" made him a manager for half a day, pandered for patronage with the filthiest performance he could hire from the beer-halls!

This is the sort of humbug and hypocrisy the student of the theatre must pretend to countenance if he would keep himself clear of suspicion of partiality. Rather, a thousand times, a charge of partisanship.

If one were so foolish as to care to align himself with either of the contending sides, and sought to determine his choice of allies merely on the score of the purity of their respective enterprises, what a quandary would halt him! On all sides, at every turn, he finds precisely the same conditions—the warring factions, in their struggle for the popularity without which the theatre of today, and of yesterday and of all days, collapses into bankruptcy, fall upon the same kind of weapons to conquer patronage. "The Christian" that furnishes the sinews of theatrical war to the one side is fully as sacrilegious as the rival's "Ben Hur," and infinitely meaner in its sanctimonious snivel. One manager brings his "problem plays" from London; another, his deadliest foe, falls upon those of Paris. And, surely, *Mrs. Tanqueray* is no worse than *Césarine*. *Zaza* is no rottener at heart than *Becky Sharp*. *Tess* took her lovers no more tragically than *Sapho* took hers. *Magda* and the doubly unwelcome *Mrs. Hatch* went wrong with no more reason and, in their souls, with no more repentance than the average flirtatious wife of the French farces, which ceased of production as soon as the theatre-going public showed surfeit.

The accident that some player may impersonate her especial favorites among these picturesque sinners with exceptional intelligence, skill and charm does not change the moral question involved. Indeed, it may be said that there are some things that are all the worse for being the better done. The player's particular attributes, accomplishments, aspirations and fame may lend a vicarious dignity to the emprise, but the superiority is wholly personal, not academic; a matter of aesthetics, not of ethics. There is nothing in the achievement to justify a holier-than-thou attitude, although the performer may justly be proclaimed professionally peerless in the domain in reference. I tried long to convince myself, and I tried, in argument, to have others convince me, that there is some essential and moral difference between a vicious character impersonated by a skilful player and that same character suggested by a player less competent; but it is not easy to discern any basilar divergence. It is extraordinary that there should ever have been any confusion regarding this phase of things in the theatre, but it represents a form of humbug to which an Anglo-Saxon community is traditionally susceptible and lenient.

The new "stars," in which the past year has been so prolific—there's been a theme for pharisaism! That youth, ambition and favor, at least enough to encourage, and happy opportunity should have dared to make the hazard of better fortunes—how that has been seized upon as token of the stage's decadence! It is this feature of the prevailing conditions that nagged the rich and famous actor who has been proving his devotion to the "art" of his profession by playing "Monte Cristo" for twenty-five years, to decide that the drama has gone to the dogs. The subject is one that may be approached without trepidation, for here both the opposing factions stand on delicate ground. In the scale of true greatness as actors, a Faversham and a Hackett will pretty nearly balance. Ethel Barrymore's fresh fascination is as valid, theatrically, as Mrs. Lemoyne's dull finish. In its way, Warfield's *genre* is as considerable as the venerable Mr. Stoddart's. In craftsmanship, if not in charm, a Miss Galland ranks with a Miss Mannerling.

And all of these players, together with all such other of their colleagues as desire to puff the light of their gifts into stellar effulgence, have a perfect right to their aspirations. Criticism that denies it to them is impertinent; and the history even of the recent stage shows that it has frequently proved preposterous. Julia Marlowe's earlier appeal for the consideration of metropolitan criticism and patronage was jeered at as presumptuous; she was informed that her proper place was a stock company, and in other ways was treated with top-lofty disdain. That, too, at a time when her acting was as effective as it is today. Mrs. Fiske herself, in some ways the most seriously regarded figure in the America theatre, was dealt with even more curtly, and advised to return to the cross-roads whence she had come. Viola Allen, who took to starring when metropolitan theatre-goers tired of her even as a factor in a stock company, has since been proclaimed, in some parts of the country, the equal of Duse. Fancy the extraordinary concatenation of circumstances that made a star of so unpromising a candidate as Henry Irving must have been in the beginning!

The truth is that any actor has a right to become a "star," and all he has to do to prove that right is to remain one. The idea that a player should wait until youth and fire and grace have departed before throwing down the glove to fortune, is absurd. The carping of colleagues less daring or less lucky may be dismissed as the products of jealousy and bitterness, but the jeering of criticism is mere cant.

The notion that the existing conduct of the theatre is peculiarly hostile to the encouragement and development of the American drama is one to which many of us spontaneously incline. But fervor against the methods of the present masters of the situation and yearning for the good old times—the days of Daly and Wallack—are dreadfully chilled by the recollection of what they did, or rather did not do, for the native playwright. Who of us, of this generation, ever saw the work of an American dramatist on the stage so fastidiously directed by Augustin Daly? The splendid traditions of that house radiate from Shakespeare, Sheridan, Congreve, Cibber, Centlivre—all glories that would have continued conspicuous without the refurbishing of Mr. Daly. Against any new lights of native origin the doors of his house were firmly barred, at least in our time. Years and years ago, I believe, a play by Bronson Howard was produced at Daly's Theatre, but the present ranks of playgoers and critics know of it only by hearsay. Mr. Daly is a cherished memory in theatre management, but he gave precious small heed to the American dramatist. And the Wallacks even less. They went to England and France for their plays, and even preferred to have their actors come from across the seas.

In the light of such facts, how can one honestly and consistently take up arms against conditions that have evolved scores of successful American plays in the past decade, and introduced the American dramatists into some of the most difficult theatres of Europe? With the individuals involved in these conditions the fair-minded and sincere student of the theatre has no concern; but, above all, he has no wish to be dragooned into the chorus of humbug that shouts praises of a nationally valueless past, nor to echo the cant that falsifies the present or else vents blame of its deficiencies in personal animosities.

In the matter of that same American drama there has just been an interesting test, and one quite as decisive as such things ever can be, in the inevitable limitations.

Advocates of the wholly admirable project of a subsidized Na-



SIR HENRY IRVING.

BY THE BROTHER OF MR. BEERBOHM TREE.

tional Theatre have made a great point of the probable existence, in this country, of valuable plays that, by reason of the writers' obscurity, or the managers' timidity or stupidity, or for any one or all together of a dozen reasons, were denied production. Sharing in this belief that there was here an Unacted Drama, the work of men and women who could not get a hearing, and that in all this lost material there might be, nay, must be, some one play of extraordinary worth, this journal invited playwrights throughout the United States to submit their manuscripts in contest for a very decent prize—one thousand dollars. Of course, this involved no surrender of any part of the possible future of the successful play, as the paper asked only the privilege of publishing the elected manuscript in this issue.

It may be stated, without further preamble, that the contest was, in some regards, a great disappointment.

There was no failure of expectation as to the number of plays submitted. They came by dozens, scores and hundreds. They came from all parts of the United States; and from several countries across the sea where the writers were sojourning, either in travel or in the diplomatic service, or in helping in the rule of "protected" domains, or in slaughtering the patriots of the Philippines. Geographically, indeed, the contest was of invigorating latitude. And in range of quality it was almost as extensive, the plays running through all the vaguely separate grades of imbecility, inanity, vapidity, on to mediocrity, and reaching brilliancy in instances surprisingly sparse. Some of the manuscripts were obviously wrought by hands of the rawest apprenticeship in the craft of writing, but most of them indicated considerable literary experience even in dramatic composition. A few of the plays—in fact, all that, after a sifting and resifting process by expert readers, finally reached the committee of award—were the work of men and women of some note in the world of letters, of position or acquaintance sufficient to insure them respectful consideration by managers.

That is the most significant point of the entire matter.

Indeed, it has transpired that every one of the plays upon which the judges had finally to pass had already run the gamut of managers' offices and actors' readings. And it has also been ascertained that many of the plays cast aside in the preliminary elimination had enjoyed like opportunity. It is evident, therefore, that none of the ponderable contestants suffered from the exclusiveness, indifference or dread of initiative that are alleged to rule in the matter of unestablished talent striving for notice in the theatre. All were given a chance on the trial-scales.

The result of the contest, undertaken with free and open mind, and conducted with complete care and sufficient intelligence as to examination of manuscripts, shows that the most arrant humbug of all the humbugs droning about the subject is that which imagines a vast field of undiscovered talent in dramatic composition, and which misrepresents it as unable to reach pertinent notice.

Let it not be supposed that the above catalogue comprises all the diverse delusions and shams and hypocrisies and shrewd deceptions thrust upon the attention of the professional student of the theatre during such a season as the past twelvemonth. There are some others, equally stubborn or calculating or ignoble, that tempt attack, but as they refer, in the main, to factors extraneous to the theatre as a public institution, or to matters wholly of individual import, they come not within the province of this review.

Personal Note.—I have been urged not to publish the foregoing article. Well-meaning advice has pointed out that as I have already incurred the relentless enmity of one factor in theatrical affairs—and that the most active and potent one—this uncompromising exposition of the actual conditions can only add to my foes, ranging against me all parties in a contention based, as has been shown, on cant and pharisaism. But even so, the luxury of unmasking some of the frauds of sentiment, spleen and superstition is well worth the penalty.

ALL RIGHT

IS it supposed my Christmas joy to lessen,
When I am bound full soggy things to eat,
Bought from a neighb'ring sordid del'catessen,
At what Chicago doth pronounce a "feat"?

No; for 'tis better thus, a lonely sandwich,
Than, faking jollity you do not feel,
Falling beneath that festal bestial ban, which
Ne'er doth enthuse, and never can appeal.

The Cynic.

WONDERFULLY MADE

TED—Why don't you use that Christmas present your girl made you?

NED—I'm afraid to. I don't know whether she intended it as a tobacco pouch or a necktie.

The Chaffer.

CHRISTMAS IN A HOTEL

I AM no cynic of a noxious mind,
Nor of established forms an agitator;
But still I query just what sort or kind
Of Yule log lurks within my radiator.

The Boarder.



"IT'S NOT YOUR SORT OF A PARTY AT ALL, I SHOULD IMAGINE," SAID CHELTENHAM.

PENNSYLVANIA R. R.

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